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PALMIRA
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ERMANCE.

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A Novel.
IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY MRS. MEEKE,
AUTHOR OF
COUNT ST. BLANCARD.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR WILLIAM LANE, AT THE
Minerva-Press,
LEADENHALL-STREET.

M.DCC.XCVII.



ADMIRAL

AND

HER MAJESTY

OF GREAT BRITAIN

IN THREE VOLUMES

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CHAP. VIII.

BAZILE returned home in a very bad humour, and could not conceive what his father could see to admire in the Duke, or how they became so intimate; as to him, he appeared haughty, morose, and severe; an absolute cynic at three and twenty. This

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journey

journey had also turned out very contrary to his expectations: there were no diversions at Ypres, nor any public walks, where he could display his handsome person to advantage; no garrison, since the Dutch had agreed upon the Emperor's consenting to demolish the fortifications, and withdraw troops; of course there could be no parade; and the Vanval's, though excellent people, and particularly obliging, were certainly not very amusing companions, the old surgeon and his nephew Julien excepted: the former was wholly engrossed by his father, and the latter in escorting his sister and Madame de Franval; and so much did he dread the thoughts of appearing in public with so low a party, he once almost designed to feign illness to avoid accompanying them to church; but curiosity got the better of his pride, and vanity induced him to adorn himself in the new suit his father had prevented him from wearing during his journey. The whole party was ready early, and proceeded, much against

Bazile's

Bazile's inclination, in a body to the church; his sisters and Madame de Franval excepted, who went in Mr. de Melac's coach, attended as usual by Mr. Julien. The church was already crowded when they arrived; but Mr. de Melac having walked that way in the morning, and made a handsome present to the Swiss, they found excellent places kept for them near the choir, among the first people in the town and environs. The Bishop soon made his appearance in his pontificals, and the ceremony began.

Mr. de Melac and the rest of his party looked anxiously round for the Duke and the rest of the Bishop's visitors, but none of them were to be seen. Mr. Vanval's nephew, the resident, pointed out a small chapel adjoining the choir, where he presumed they were; but the not being able to get a sight of them was a strange disappointment, to Mr. de Melac in particular. However, soon after the elevation of the Sacrament,

they saw his Grace advancing slowly through the crowd, most elegantly dressed, leading the trembling Ermance, who never appeared to greater advantage;—her left hand was within the Duke's arm, and in her right she held a large silver cup: one of the Bishop's Chaplains and the Swiss preceded them to clear the way, as the choir was almost as much crowded as the body of the church. She began her solicitations with the Bishop, and then went round among the nobility, whose donations were so liberal she was obliged to empty her cup before she proceeded farther. The Duke had met the eyes of Mr. de Melac more than once; in fact they followed him wherever he went; and wondered what his friend would think to see him thus employed, easily guessed the conjectures he would form, as Ermance's cross would not undeceive him; it was so common for young women of family to belong to some chapter-house before they married; and as he had convinced him he was acquainted with both Mr. and Madame de Neufpont's

Neufpont's family, he most probably knew the latter had a sister Abbess of Bourbourg. As soon as they were near enough, the Duke addressed him as his dear friend, and gave him the hand still at liberty. Ermance looked very anxiously, first at him, then at the Duke, and seemed to wish to say something, and yet afraid to express her thoughts; but as soon as they had ceased speaking, she held out her cup, and in a soft tremulous voice, entreated Mr. de Melac would remember the poor.

“Avarice itself could not resist such an application in favour of the distressed and wretched,” said Mr. de Melac, bowing and putting very liberally into the proffered cup. From what had passed between the Duke and himself upon the road, he had not a doubt but he had been surprised, as he in some measure expected; and that this was the bride elect. Ernestine and Clemence each put a Louis into the cup, and Bazile, chusing to appear generous, or more properly speaking,

speaking, to display his riches to the Vanval family, doubled that sum; his Grace then proceeded with his trembling companion. While Ernestine and Clemence expressed their admiration of the lovely *quétense* in a low voice, Madame de Franval pitied her excessively, saying she did not seem to possess sufficient assurance for such an undertaking, and was afraid she would find the task very fatiguing in such weather, and in such a crowd. Bazile had been too much taken up with contemplating the Duke's dress to notice his companion, and particularly envied his hat with feathers, and red heels, but still more his sword; the two first were distinctions so totally confined to the first nobility, he never expected to be allowed to decorate his sweet person with either; but the latter merely depended upon his father. If he would but allow him to enter the army, he might sport a defensive weapon immediately; as it was, he thought, he might be allowed to wear embroidery; therefore determined to save money to purchase exactly
such

such a suit, not having a doubt but he should look to equal advantage; nay, he hardly knew whether such a dress would not become him more than regimentals. While he was making these reflections and forming these resolutions, Ernestine asked her father, if he knew who this beautiful young lady was? but he could not, he said, satisfy her curiosity.

“His Grace has not a sister,” said Clemence; “but it may be his cousin.”

“Possibly she is still dearer to the Duke than either a sister or a cousin, said Madame de Franval, and yet no relation.”

“I can’t assist you in your conjectures, my good friend,” said Mr. de Melac, “though you may be right.”

Bazile, having overheard what they were whispering about, gave it as his opinion the Duke would not marry such a girl; and for his part he believed he was already engaged, looking at Ernestine while he spoke. Struck

by his manner and pointed expression, she asked him if he was in his Grace's secrets?

"I should rather suppose you are," said Bazile.

Clemence could not restrain a smile, knowing she had been the cause of all these clever remarks, and was convinced Bazile still supposed the Duke was an admirer of their sisters; but as Mr. de Melac gave them a look they understood, ceased speaking, and only followed the Duke and his fair companion with their eyes to all parts of the church.

The crowd was excessive, and the day remarkably warm; those who sat still were therefore very much incommoded by the heat, but it was almost intolerable to those who were obliged to move in the throng. The Swiss and Chaplain broke the way as much as possible; but no sooner were his Grace and the fair *quêteuse* able to advance
a few

a few steps, than the crowd closed in upon them behind : Ermance bore it pretty well for some time, but before they reached the end of the principal aisle, the colour began to forsake her cheeks, and she grew very faint ; the Duke, who was exceedingly anxious about her, owing to the inconvenience he felt from the same cause, remarked the visible changes in her countenance, and repented very much he had not relieved her from so fatiguing a duty, by representing the probable consequences of her making the attempt in such a crowd, to the Bishop and Madame de L'Ecluse. While he was making these reflections, her voice became scarcely articulate, and he felt her arm tremble within his. Seriously alarmed, he expressed his fears in the most feeling manner ; she endeavoured to answer his anxious enquiries, but her voice failed her ; the Duke took the cup from her hand and gave it to the Swiss ; she gave a sigh, and tried once more to speak ; but was obliged to catch hold of the Duke with both hands.

"Clear the way," said his Grace to the Chaplain and Swift, "to the nearest door." They endeavoured to obey him; but it was some time before they could make room for them to advance towards a sort of vestry-room adjoining the church. Thither he would have led his fair companion—her legs failed her; he caught her in his arms; but, before he could remove her from the crowd, to all appearance she was lifeless. The Duke now insisted upon the people making way in such a commanding tone, he was soon obeyed. The moment he reached the room, he desired the Swift to shut the door, and throw the windows, which looked into the street, open; he then placed his lifeless burthen in a chair, while the Chaplain sent some of the people assembled without the church for a glass of water; in the course of a few seconds he had plenty; and in a very short time the beautiful invalid's spirits and colour both began to revive. Several ladies had been absolutely clamorous

clamorous in their offers of assistance at the door which led into the church, but his Grace would not allow it to be opened, knowing the room would soon be filled; the Chaplain and Swift were therefore his only attendants; and when Madame de Moncove had recovered her speech, she agreed, at the Duke's request, to allow the Swifts to finish the *quête*, though she could have made a second attempt, and assured him she was quite well again; "Indeed," said she, "I hardly know what has been the matter with me, for I never fainted before in my life. My good aunt often wishes she was in Heaven; but I must say I am very glad, thanks to your Grace's skill, I am once more restored to life."

"And I am very happy," said the Duke, "to find my gay sister can already make a jest of her recent illness."

"I protest you have lost great part of your colour. I am almost of opinion you would have followed my wife's example if you had staid much longer in the church; let me

advise you to take your own prescription, in a few of those drops you poisoned me with just now."

"A little fresh air will be of more service to me," said the Duke smiling; "and with your leave we will step out of one of these windows and return to the palace: the Bishop or Madame de L'Ecluse's carriage are certainly in waiting by this time, and I don't feel the least inclination to return into the church."

"Nor do I feel any wish to make the attempt," said Ermance; "but once more accept my thanks for the trouble I have given you. Had I foreseen accepting your offers would have been attended with such serious inconvenience to yourself, I should not have intruded so much upon your goodness; though I hardly know what would have become of me had I been left to the care of the poor chaplain."

"Believe me, my dearest Ermance, I am truly happy it was in my power to be of the smallest service to you; but, *trève aux com-
plement,*

plement, which between friends are very absurd; and suppose our party ignorant of what has happened, and conclude we are gone home, as they could not see our exit from where they sat."

"Don't mention my having been ill, I entreat you; I know my good aunt would be frightened to death were she to hear it: only send her and the Bishop word, we finished at the end of the church, and could not get back again. The chaplain, who had remained with them, was dispatched with a message to the Bishop; who was entreated to inform Madame de L'Ecluse in the manner least likely to alarm her, what had induced them to retire; and as the windows of the room they were in were nearly level with the ground, they got out at one of them; and Mr. de Melac's carriage being the first the Duke caught sight of, he made use of it to convey them to the palace.

The Duke then advised the once more lively Ermance to lie down for an hour; but
she

she would not listen to him, assuring him she was perfectly well, and only hoped the Chaplain would not make a very dismal story of the message he had been sent to deliver.

"I trust he has more sense; but they will not be long after as the service was nearly finished before we left the church, and the Swiss would soon conclude the *quête*."

"Upon my word the people in general were very generous," said Ermance. "Pray who was that gentleman you addressed as your dear friend, and those handsome girls with whom you also seemed acquainted?"

"The gentleman is the Receiver General of Dunkirk, and the young ladies are his daughters, two very agreeable, amiable, unaffected girls."

"So they appear," said Ermance; "but do you know at the first moment I almost thought their father was a near relation of your's, you are certainly very much alike."

"I have been told so before," said the Duke; "indeed the same remark was made by several people the very first time we ever met,

met; and I believe that was what induced me to endeavour to cultivate his friendship; we are now very intimate, and each succeeding interview increases my esteem for him."

"Then I am sure he is a very amiable man," said Ermance.—She was going on, when the exclamation of—"Where, where is my dear child!"—interrupted her, and the entrance of the Abbess, breathless with haste, made her fly to meet her, saying, "Here I am, my dearest aunt, as well as ever I was in my life."

The good lady caught her in her arms, and embraced her most affectionately; saying, "What you must have suffered, *ma pouponne*, how much I was to blame to allow you to run such a hazard; do tell me how you find yourself?"

"Quite recovered, my dear aunt; you cannot think what an excellent physician his Grace has proved himself."

"The Duke is all goodness, my child,

and must have found the heat almost insupportable himself. However, I certainly would not have permitted you to mingle in such a crowd under any other person's protection."

The entrance of the Bishop and his other guests afforded the Duke an excuse not to answer what the good lady deemed a very high compliment.

The Bishop and all the party expressed their joy to find the fair *quêteuse* so much better than they had dared to hope ; and the former declared the sum collected far exceeded his most sanguine expectations. This rather consoled Madame de L'Ecluse for the fright she had undergone.

Ermance had seen too little of the world to understand even the meaning of the word affectation ; she therefore eat a very hearty dinner, and wished to have accompanied the party to vespers afterwards, which was absolutely

lutely over-ruled ; her aunt said the church would be quite as much crowded as it was in the morning ; for the bishop is to officiate ; and the heat might bring on a relapse of her complaint ; so the other young, or rather maiden lady, was left at home to keep her company.

Till this afternoon the Duke's thoughts had never wandered while at church. He was in the same chapel in the morning, and by mere accident he had chosen the place Ermance had so recently occupied ; this led him to trace their steps in the church : his eyes were often involuntarily turned towards the spot where he had supported her in his arms. How like death are such fits, said he to himself ; the idea made him shudder. He felt himself particularly interested in all that concerned her. Was she not the sister of his destined bride ? He sighed twice while making these reflections, which Madame de L'Ecluse, who sat next him, attributed to the fervour of
of

of his devotion, which added to the respect she already felt for him.

As soon as vespers were over, the Duke hurried home on foot. The Bishop he knew would take care of the ladies. He found himself in the street before he considered he ought to have mentioned his intentions of walking home to his companion; he looked round for them, as they had left the chapel together, but could not distinguish them among the throng; he therefore hastened forwards, presuming they would suppose he had missed them in the crowd.

Ermance was alone in the saloon when he arrived; her companion was in the garden below, and they were talking to each other from one of the windows. Upon hearing the door open, she looked round, and, seeing who it was, gave a spring forward to meet the Duke. What, first, and alone! I hope you have been very much edified? I hardly knew the meaning of the word *ennui*
till

till this afternoon; and my companion seemed troubled with the same complaint; therefore all our conversation has rolled upon the unusual length of the hours. I was just telling her, as you came in, I believed you staid *salut*. Pray where did you leave my aunt and the Bishop?"

"They will be here in a few minutes, I dare say; I missed them as we were coming out of the church; and upon reflecting what you so lately suffered through heat, thought it would be most prudent to pursue my route on foot; as I was really anxious to know how you did?"

"You are very kind, *Mon cher Frère*. I had almost forgot my tranquil exit from the church—was it much crowded this afternoon?"

"By curiosity, not devotion, I am afraid," said the Duke.

"Too often the case. How have I seen at Senlis, and at Bourbourg, the nuns and pensioners at the former, and us Canoneſſes at the latter, form the whole congregation during

during mass or vespers: but if a nun has been going to take the habit, or the veil, or a Canoness to receive the cup, you might have walked upon the people's heads!—What an opinion it has led me to entertain of the piety of the generality of mankind!”

“I should hardly have expected so grave an observation from my lively little sister; yet I fully subscribe to its truth.”

The Bishop and the rest of the company now made their appearance—enquiring after the health of Ermance. They told the Duke they had been at a loss to guess what was become of him:—he replied, that having lost sight of them, without reflecting he might probably keep them in waiting, he had walked on, and found himself at the palace gates before that idea occurred. Ermance gave him a look, but not expressive of disapprobation, as from his own confession his anxiety for her had made him in some measure forget what was due to his party. What an animated description she should have

have it in her power to write to her dear Palmira of this fete, and of the Duke's kind attentions towards her! When a thought suddenly struck her, "might not Palmira be jealous if she said too much in his praise, or expatiated too warmly upon the politeness he had shewn her?—Yet, if she permitted her pen to follow the dictates of her heart, she must write as she felt. However she should have time enough to arrange her ideas when she returned to Bourbourg. If she was at a loss, she might apply to her aunt for assistance."

There was a vast deal of company in the evening, but Ermance's natural gayety seemed all to have forsaken her—her dejection was totally placed to her morning's fatigue; and as the Duke had been in some respects a fellow sufferer, his want of spirits and frequent absence of mind, though he took infinite pains to exert himself, were placed to the same account.

On retiring for the night, Ermance reflected how rapidly the last three days had

passed away. It had been agreed the Abbess and herself should set out on their return to Bourbourg immediately after breakfast: this gave her little uneasiness, as the Duke meant to set out at the same time for Dunkirk: still she felt more than ever the dislike she had early imbibed for a monastic life; she had been long enough in her intended brother-in-law's company to discover many of his amiable qualities; and it was very possible they might not meet again for months, nay perhaps for years!—She might never see him more; if a war broke out he would be sent abroad, and exposed to a thousand dangers!—And her mother might alter her mind, and not remove her from Bourbourg: she felt happy when the lights were out, her aunt in bed, and their attendants withdrawing, for they occupied the same apartment: she was then at liberty to give way to her reflections unmolested. Not feeling herself at all inclined to sleep, and her sister's marriage uppermost in her thoughts, a sentiment strongly resembling

bling envy, began to gain ground in her bosom. Would Palmira be as capable of appreciating the Duke's merit? would she be equally anxious to contribute to his felicity? repeated sighs, the consequence of these doubts, induced the Abbess to enquire if she was not well.

Ermance affected sleep, not chusing to feign indisposition she was totally free from, nor to acknowledge the real cause of those symptoms of sorrow.

At length the sun made its appearance, and Ermance stole out of bed, wishing to take a solitary ramble in the Bishop's extensive gardens, to compose her agitated mind. Convinced none of the family were stirring she began to dress herself with the utmost expedition. Notwithstanding her caution her aunt awoke; and, astonished to hear her stirring, knowing her not to be an early riser in general, she called to enquire first how she
did;

did ; and having received a satisfactory answer, next enquired the hour.

“ It has just struck six,” said Ermance—
“ Well, my child, we need not be moving yet ; you will over fatigue yourself before we set out : go to bed again for another hour—we shan’t set out before nine.”

Ermance pleaded a wish to take a walk before breakfast ; the morning air would revive her spirits, which were unusually depressed by the uncommon warmth of the weather. Approaching a window that looked into the garden while she was speaking, the first object she saw was the Duke, advancing slowly up one of the walks ;—his eyes directed towards the window she was looking from—he kissed his hand—she returned the compliment ; and hastily completing her toilette, ran down stairs, after repeating to her aunt a walk would be of infinite service to her, without mentioning whom she had seen ; but the Duke was very possibly going
to

to set off; he might have received an express from Dunkirk, or have something which required his immediate presence; and she should never forgive herself if she did not seize so favourable an opportunity of taking leave of him.

The Duke, who had rather expected she would join him, was walking in sight of the door when she came out, and hastened to meet her—took her proffered hand, which he raised to his lips, while she said,

“ Seeing you up so early, I was afraid you was going to set off.” “ You did me very great injustice, my dear Ermance, if you supposed I should think of leaving Ypres without seeing you! But how came you to be thus *matinale* ?”

“ I believe I must place my early rising solely to the heat of the weather, which prevented me from sleeping; I was coming down when I saw you from the window.”

These compliments over, each seemed rather at a loss for conversation. The Duke

asked Ermance which she preferred, Bourbourg or the Abbaye of Senlis?

“ I like neither ; all convents or chapter-houses bear, in my opinion, a gloomy resemblance to each other ; and if they are placed in the finest situations France affords, superstition and bigotry have commonly contrived between them to exclude every beautiful prospect. Bourbourg is a very dull town, and the country round is such a dead flat, I the less regret our want of prospect : the house is large and handsomely furnished,—but I wish your Grace would spare me a description of it, by paying us a visit.”

Before the Duke could reply, Madame de L'Ecluse, who had summoned her attendants as soon as her niece left her, joined them. To find them together excited neither surprise nor alarm ; the Duke she looked upon almost as a married man, and Ermance as his sister ; their familiarity was therefore very natural. To her niece's great joy, she gave the Duke a very pressing invitation to their chapter-house, and he promised to call on them before he left Dunkirk. At

eight o'clock they were summoned to breakfast, and by nine Madame de L'Ecluse's carriage was at the door. The Bishop and the Duke attended the ladies down stairs; and Ermance, with a gayety very foreign from her heart, entreated the Duke would remember his promise, and that she was not partial either to a chapter-house or a convent. He handed her into the carriage, and, having once more assured both the Abbess and herself he would wait upon them before he quitted Flanders, saw the carriage drive off, with a sensation of regret he was almost unable to define. In a very few minutes his own post-chaise came to the door; and, after taking a polite leave of the Bishop, who hoped speedily to have the honour of uniting him to Madame de Moncove, he drove to Mr. Vanval's. Mr. de Melac was ready and in waiting; his own carriage had been gone forwards near an hour: he therefore took a hearty leave of his well-meaning Flemish host, and stepped into the post-chaise; and before they had exchanged the compliments of the morning, they were off the stones.

CHAP. II.

DE Melac soon observed his companion looked rather thoughtful; he therefore thought it incumbent upon him to try to enliven him, and hoped his Grace had been amused at Ypres?

“ My time has passed very agreeably, said he; the Bishop is a most worthy prelate, and a very amiable man.”

“ I think I never saw a more elegant young person than the lady your Grace attended during the *quête* yesterday. You was taken in, as you rather seemed to expect. I suppose——”

“ That young lady, my dear friend, is sister of Madame de Moncove,” unconsciously slack-

slackening two buttons of his waistcoat as he concluded.

“ Indeed !” said Mr. de Melac, “ though her being a canoness might have led me to suppose she was not Madame de Neufpont’s eldest daughter. I was in hopes—I beg your Grace’s pardon, I hardly know what I was going to say.—The sister of so fine a young woman must be handsome, and may possess many more amiable qualities ; for the countenance is not always the true index of the mind.”

“ Very true ;” then told to him why Ermance had been at the *fête*, and where she resided. The tale was very simple ; yet the Duke hesitated, and coloured several times during the recital ; and his fancying Mr. de Melac perceived his embarrassment, did not tend to remove it.

He was not mistaken in his conjectures. De Melac soon guessed Ermance had made a very strong impression upon his heart ; and thought it was a very mistaken notion, and

even very imprudent, to throw a beautiful young creature in the way of a fine young man, merely because he was engaged to her sister, whom he had never seen. He more than ever deprecated the idea of those family arrangements, in which the heart was so seldom consulted. Yet he entertained very little doubt, but the indulgent mother the Duke had described would instantly break off the intended match, were she acquainted with the revolution this journey to Ypres seemed to have made in her son's sentiments.

The reflections of both gentlemen had occasioned a considerable pause in their discourse. De Melac, wishing to break the silence, looked at the Duke, who had thrown himself into a corner of the carriage, and had got his hand to his forehead. Perceiving de Melac's penetrating eyes upon him, he said, "this sultry weather prevented me from sleeping last night, and the sun disturbed me very early this morning."

De

De Melac agreed the night had been unusually warm, though he had been fortunate enough to have a very large airy room. He advised him to endeavour to take a nap in the carriage, as want of rest often brought on the head-ache.

“In general,” said the Duke; and these rough roads are not very likely to promote sleep.”

“Nor a down bed,” thought de Melac, “when the heart is ill at ease.” This was a remark he chose to keep to himself. Both remained silent for half an hour or more, till the Duke, making an effort, said,

“Upon my word, Mr. de Melac, I am quite ashamed of myself; I think I never was a worse travelling companion.”

“We cannot always be gay if we would. I hope you find yourself better?”

“Oh! pray don’t attribute to illness what is the effects of stupidity: start some gay subject; if we do not talk we shall
c 4 become

become thoughtful, and that will not always raise the spirits."

De Melac considered this as a half acknowledgment that his reflections were not of the most agreeable nature : willing, however, to oblige his young friend, he turned the conversation upon the West Indies, and soon transported him in imagination among the sugar plantations at Gaudaloupe. The Duke felt interested in his descriptions, and, before they reached Rosebrugge, seemed to have recovered his usual spirits. This was the last town in the empire, and his Grace having so lately passed through, and known to be a nobleman of rank, four very good horses were put to his carriage, and two postillions, dressed in the Imperial livery, with bugle horns slung over their shoulders. As soon as mounted, they began to display their dexterity in sounding their horns, which animated their horses even more than the whip or spur. The Duke expressed his approbation of this German custom in their way

way to Ypres, as it serves effectually to clear the way for travellers.

Within a few hundred yards of the town there is a barrier or gate, where travellers are liable to have their baggage searched when they enter or leave the empire; but a six livre piece given in answer to the usual question of "*N'avez vous rien contre les ordonnances de l'Empereur?*" generally induces the clerks, or *commis*, to allow people to pass. The house, or rather hut, that serves them for shelter, stands upon an eminence, and was to the right hand of the way the Duke was coming: the road runs upon a bank, and has a deep ditch on either side to prevent those who might be so inclined from making their escape with contraband goods. In winter these ditches are commonly several feet deep in water; but, owing to the heat of the weather, they were now nearly dry.

The horses were so enlivened by the sound of their favourite music, that, by the time they reached this gate, they became rather

unruly, when the boys wished to stop. Mr. de Melac begged the lads to take care; they assured him there was no danger, the horses were only rather out of exercise. Owing to the Duke's generosity they were not detained more than half a minute, and away they went again, as before, to the sound of the horn. The off-leader, a very powerful young horse, having too much head, got the advance so much just as the road took a turn, that he forced the postillion beside the bank to the left. De Melac, perceiving their danger, as the wheel horses were not able to stop, was trying to open the door of the carriage, meaning to jump out, as he sat on the right side; but, before he could effect his design, they were overturned with such violence, that the carriage rolled over, and fell into the ditch already mentioned. The Duke was under Mr. de Melac, who received very little hurt, only a few bruises of no consequence. The horses, from the badness of their tackle, were soon disengaged; de Melac scrambled upon his legs,

legs, and called aloud to his companion, to enquire if he was hurt, but received no answer; and, on looking down, saw him lying motionless at the bottom of the carriage. Half wild, he now repeatedly called for assistance, while he tried to force the shattered door from the chaise. It soon gave way to his efforts; for terror seemed to have increased his strength. He then endeavoured to raise the Duke, but was unequal to the task for want of room. The servants, who were following on horseback, had not been able to keep up with the chaise; but the instant they perceived the accident, hurried forward, and the carriage was now surrounded by the postillion and *commis*, each eager to assist, and all lamenting the Duke's untimely fate; for every one concluded him dead, from the vehement exclamations of Mr. de Melac. He was now absolutely raving: his incoherent expressions made the Duke's servants almost fancy him distracted; and his despair seemed to know no bounds.—
“ Oh ! why was I spared ! ” he exclaimed :—

“death in any shape would have been preferable to such a sight!” He impatiently reprimanded the servants as a set of awkward beings, running wildly on till they had got their master upon the side of the carriage. Very few signs of life were discoverable; though the blood was flowing very freely from a cut received just above the temple.

De Melac leaped down, and commanded the servants to let him raise the Duke. They obeyed, as well as they could, in assisting to place him in his arms. At any other time he would have thought himself incapable of such an exertion; but now he supported him up the bank; and, as there was a little current of air, he laid him down upon the grass near the hut, and began to tear off his clothes to give the blood a free circulation; ordering every one to do something to promote his recovery; but the servants were so frightened, they only ran against each other: every thing that was tight about him was loosened, and water poured down his throat, and

and applied to his temple. Still he gave no signs of life; but de Melac felt his pulse beat, and that afforded him some hopes: he now began to wonder the surgeon he had repeatedly, dispatched the by-standers for, was not arrived, as he knew immediate bleeding must be indispensably necessary. The fact was, no one had obeyed his orders; but, while he continued raving, and the servants were preparing to go in search of the first medical man the place afforded, who should arrive but Vanval. They had breakfasted at Rosebrugge, at a house some distance from the one where the Duke had changed horses; and though they had seen his post-chaise dashing along, had not been able to speak to him. The coachman was ordered to make the best of his way, that they might overtake the Duke's carriage, while the *commis* were doing their duty. This turned out very fortunate. Mr. de Melac's coachman, perceiving some dreadful accident had happened, stopped
thirty

thirty or forty yards before he reached the spot, that he might not alarm the ladies : he saw his master was safe ; and the Duke's valet, having a little recovered his senses, no sooner caught sight of the coach than he flew towards it, opened the door, and dragged out the old fat surgeon, without even letting down the step. Such rough usage rather alarmed the old Flamand, who was no sooner upon his legs than he was hurried along to where the Duke laid. Accustomed to these horrid sights, his wonted *sang froid* soon began to return ; while de Melac entreated him, in the most moving accents, to exert his utmost skill, though he was afraid he came too late. Vanval, without making any reply, took out his instruments, and breathed a vein. The ladies were by this time arrived, and screamed the instant they beheld the Duke. The first word Vanval uttered was — “ A lady's garter this moment—none else will do ; ” and in a few seconds he was presented with three ; and seeing the blood began
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to flow pretty freely, begged the spectators would calm their fears; he would be answerable for the Duke's recovery; and this assurance from a man in whose skill they placed the most implicit faith, gave spirits to them all.—“Oh! say he will live, my best friend,” said de Melac, “and I shall think myself bound to pray for you all the days of my life!”

“Then I need not leave much money for masses, to be said after my decease,” said Vanval; “for the prayers of so good a man will certainly reach heaven; and as yet I have not discovered any wound or bruise to give me any reason to suppose his Grace will not do very well.” Every countenance brightened, and in a very short time he began very slowly to recover. The surgeon's nephew assisted his uncle in binding up the arm, and in feeling if any bones were broke, or out of their place; but, to the great joy of the by-standers, found nothing deranged. His Grace opened his eyes for some seconds before he was able to speak. Bazile, seeing him

him so likely to do well, went to examine the fragments of the shattered carriage : when he returned he gave the company a most exaggerated account of the damage it had sustained ; and then asked his father if he was in it when it was overturned ?—" To be sure I was, fool !" said de Melac.

" I only wish I had been with you instead of the Duke."

" Would to God you had !" said de Melac, hastily ; which half petrified Bazile, who had merely wished, as the Duke seemed perfectly sensible, to give him a proof of his regard. Vanval sent his nephew back to Rosebrugge to a gentleman with whom he was acquainted, intreating he would order a bed to be prepared for the Duke's reception. The first word he spoke was addressed to Mr. de Melac, whom he hoped had escaped unhurt.

" I have only met with a few scratches," said the still anxious de Melac ; " but half an hour ago I would have compounded

pounded for the loss of a limb, to have enjoyed the heart-felt satisfaction the sound of your voices gives me. How do you feel yourself?"

"Rather unwell; but I shall be better by and by."

Vanval would not allow much talking, had the Duke lifted into the coach, which was very near, and proceeded slowly back to Rosebrugge. He was soon in bed, and the surgeon, having done every thing that was necessary, insisted upon his patient being left alone for an hour or two. The travellers, therefore, assembled in a parlour; and Mr. de Melac gave an account of the accident, declaring he would never travel with that kind of music again. Every one present rejoiced they escaped with their lives from such a dreadful adventure. They learnt that some of the horses had fallen into the ditch, but without any material hurt; and the boys escaped by throwing themselves off

off in time, over the other horses ; the servants had the shattered remains of the post-chaise carried to Rosebrugge ; but it had received too much damage ever to be repaired.

When the surgeon thought fit to visit his patient, Mr. de Melac accompanied him. The Duke was much better, though very stiff and sore, and said he did not feel himself at all inclined to move, at least for that day.

“ Nor would I advise your Grace to think of proceeding on your journey to-morrow,” said Vanval ; “ if you will give me leave, I will wait your recovery.”

“ You are very obliging, my good friend,” said his Grace ; “ but I know how much you may be wanted at Dunkirk ; and I am sure I shall do very well : however, if you think it absolutely necessary, you may send Bertrand to me.” It was therefore soon agreed the coach party should pursue their journey ; but de Melac said he would
not

not return to Dunkirk without his friend ; who seemed very much flattered by his kind intentions, and said he should have felt himself very awkward to have been left among total strangers. De Melac gave Vanval the strictest injunctions to dispatch Mr. Bertrand the moment he reached Dunkirk ; and gave his coachman orders to proceed with the utmost expedition. Bazile was very much pleased his father chose to stay behind, as he should once more enjoy a little liberty, and the society of his dear Berenger ; yet wondered what could attach him so much to this Nobleman ; and could not help telling Ermence, soon after their return to Rosebrugge, he believed his father had spoken truth, when he told him he wished he had been hurt instead of the Duke.

“ Your silly speech,” said Clemence, “ deserved just such an answer, Bazile—you saw the Duke was recovering, so chose to display your mistaken zeal—but believe me, no one was

was the dupe of your hypocrisy : my father only wished you had been with him instead of the Duke, because, as you are much smaller, and infinitely lighter than him, you might not have been so material a sufferer by the overturn. Bazile, ever incorrigible, was highly offended at the liberties, as he termed it, Clemence took with him, and sulked the greatest part of their way home. The moment they reached Dunkirk, Vanval went in search of Bertrand—told him what had happened—what he had done—and gave his opinion of the injury his Grace had received. Bertrand was happy to think it was no worse, when he reflected upon what might have been the consequence of such an accident, taking one of the Duke's horses, then reached Rosebrugge before dark.

The Duke was very happy to see him, and de Melac was still more so ; though he no longer thought his friend in danger, still he would have been seriously uneasy, had he not had a surgeon in the house during the night ;

night; and, notwithstanding his Grace's remonstrances, determined to set up with Bertrand in an adjoining apartment. They took leave of their patient between eleven and twelve, his usual hour of retiring, in hopes he would go to sleep, and took their station in the next room.

Owing to his Grace's having taken a nap in the afternoon, he was rather restless, and they heard him move for some time; at last all was quiet. De Melac listened at the door, and for an hour or more scarcely did any thing but walk backwards and forwards very gently; between whiles talking in a very low voice to the surgeon about his patient, and the fright he had been in, and deploring his own want of presence of mind: "When I am terrified, I hardly know either what I do or say. A long residence in a warm climate is certainly very enervating, both to the mind and body." At last he heard a sigh; de Melac instantly took a light to see if he was asleep, contrary to the advice of the surgeon:

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the Duke heard him, notwithstanding the precaution with which he approached the bed; and gave him to understand he was not asleep; he therefore put by the curtain, and saw him as pale as death, and thought even his eyes looked dim: the light fell from his hand upon the bed, while he exclaimed, "Gracious God! what is the matter?" The surgeon, who was close behind, alarmed by this speech, ran for another light, and heard the Duke say as he returned, in a very low voice, "I feel very faint:" Bertrand instantly turned down the bed clothes to give him a little air, when he perceived a quantity of blood upon the sheets; and, before he could either enquire or discover from whence it proceeded, de Melac fell at his length upon the floor. The Duke, roused from his faintness, started upright in bed, crying out, "What is the matter with my friend?" Bertrand was too anxious just then about the Duke, to pay much attention to de Melac, having perceived he had deranged the bandage

dage upon his arm. Satisfied now there was no serious danger, his fears began to subside, and, he said the sight of blood often proved too much for some people's spirits: the Duke would not suffer him to touch him till he had seen what was the matter with de Melac. Bertrand therefore raised him as well as he was able, and assured the Duke he had only fainted, and would very soon come to himself: and since he would not allow him to bind up his arm, begged him to lay his finger on the orifice till he recovered Mr. de Melac. The Duke replaced the bandage himself, and was seriously angry to think he had alarmed them both for so slight a cause; said he had grown very sick and faint, without being aware of what had occasioned it; and the instant the blood stopped, he would have got out of bed to assist Bertrand, if his earnest remonstrances and assurances that de Melac would do very well, had not prevented him; and in a few minutes the latter opened his eyes, and looked wildly round him. He was still setting upon the floor, and,
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by way of accelerating his recovery, the surgeon began to assure him the Duke was in no danger.

“Don’t deceive me, Sir,” said the agitated de Melac; “had it pleased heaven to have taken me, how cheerfully would I have resigned my life to have saved his!”

The sound of the Duke’s voice, (who was very much affected by the proofs of regard this worthy man had given him within the last twelve hours) was more efficacious than all the surgeon’s medicines or assurances. He was soon seated upon the side of the bed, and Bertrand bound up the Duke’s arm once more, and explained to de Melac what had occasioned his recent complaint; agreeing it was very fortunate he had come to the bedside, as there had been instances of people losing their lives through similar accidents.

“Then I hope I have been, under Providence,” said the now thankful de Melac,
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“ the means of doing mankind in general a very essential service !”

The Duke expressed his gratitude for the lively interest he had demonstrated ; and having taken something to raise his spirits, at his and the surgeon's request, tried once more to find repose, while they returned to their old quarters. De Melac's visible anxiety for the Duke's safety had struck Bertrand very forcibly before his late fit ; he did not like to express his astonishment at his being thus interested, and even affected for a person he was almost a stranger to ; merely gave a few hints, which de Melac perfectly understood, and in reply said, there was no accounting for one's feelings at times : his spirits had been greatly agitated during the course of the morning ; and when once really terrified, as he had before told him, he neither knew, much less could give, any sensible reason for what he either said or did.

Though the Duke had promised to try to sleep, and really found himself so inclined from loss of blood, he could not help revolving in his mind the various occurrences

of the last twelve hours ; and the reiterated proofs of attachment de Melac had given him, though unable to speak for some time after his overturn, he had been sensible almost from the moment he was laid upon the grass, had been excessively struck with many of de Melac's unguarded expressions during his state of phrenzy ; and had particularly remarked what he had said to Bazile, which seemed to come from his very soul, and to be occasioned by the impulse of the moment : yet, could he suppose he preferred him to his own son ? it would be very strange if he did, and in some respects unnatural : yet his heart felt grief, nay even despair, while doubts of his recovery had made a very forcible impression upon him. He next reverted to the agitation he had displayed during their journey to Ypres upon several occasions, and remembered with increasing interest the remarks Vanval had made at the Ducafe, which were strengthened by what the Major had said ; nay Ermance had also been struck with the strong resem-

resemblance between them; yet he saw no possibility of their being any way related. Still de Melac talked very ambiguously, and seemed acquainted with many of his friends; and it now struck him, though the idea had never entered his head before, that the bare mention of his relationship to the Marshal de St. Firmin had occasioned the first strange illness de Melac had been seized with in his presence. When he first became acquainted with him, he said he enjoyed an excellent state of health; these sudden complaints were therefore not habitual, nor probably occasioned by the change of climate; his constitution seemed very good, and was certainly not impaired by any youthful excesses, as he had given pretty good proofs of his strength that very morning. These various reflections led him into a train of others, and made him come to a resolution, to satisfy the anxious doubts they had given rise to, the very next day. Having made this determination, he composed himself to rest, and slept very sound till eight o'clock the next morning.

morning, when he found himself much refreshed, and infinitely better.

De Melac, all impatience for his waking, had several times been near enough the bed to hear him breath, as the loosening of the bandage left a dread upon his mind nothing short of such conviction could eradicate; and no sooner did he hear him stir, than he was at the bed side.

The Duke asked who it was? and instantly put out his hand; "How are you, my dear friend? have you been in bed? you know you almost promised to oblige me in that respect when we last parted; I am sure you wanted repose as much, or even more, than I did."

"Had I found myself at all inclined to sleep, your Grace, I should certainly have lain down; but you have doubtless heard the old Italian proverb, and have very probably experienced, that

'Essere in letto et non dormire,'

is one of the most tiresome things in the world:

world : but how do you really find yourself his morning?

"Why I won't say quite well for fear you should not give me implicit credit, but so much better that I could get up with pleasure ; I have had a very long sleep, and have really got rid of all my complaints."

"I am happy to find you in such spirits, but must entreat you would not think of rising."

Bertrand seconded the motion ; then, having felt his patient's pulse, agreed there was no fever, but he must keep his bed another day.

"We shall see how that will be by and by," said the Duke ; and I will oblige you so far as to eat my breakfast before I get up."

Orders were given in consequence, and all three took that meal together ; after which the surgeon examined a cut the Duke had received upon his right temple from a piece of glass, and assured him in a month it would not be perceptible.

“I am very happy to hear it,” said the Duke smiling; “such a scar would not be very honourable, nor might not prepossess Madame de Moncove in my favour.”

Ermance at that moment coming across his mind, he mentioned the remark she had made concerning his resemblance to Mr. de Melac, who coloured very much, and seemed at a loss what to say; the Duke, perceiving the effect it had upon this amiable man, was strengthened in the resolution he had formed before he went to sleep; therefore, without any farther preface, thus began—“I won’t write to Madame de St. Piene till I return to Dunkirk; she does not know what stay I intended to make at Ypres, therefore will not expect to hear from me before Friday or Saturday; and was I to mention my accident, or that it has confined me at Roxbrugge, I dare say she would set out immediately; for I know she would fancy me much worse than I really am, and that my evil genius had presided over this journey; indeed I am almost tempted to think so myself;

self; Bertrand and I have oftener reasoned upon the doctrine of fatality. My good friend, turning towards de Melac, he is perfectly well acquainted with my family history, and agrees I have great reason to subscribe to that creed; you seemed to be of my way of thinking during our journey to Ypres; and that you may not suppose I imbibed so strange an opinion for a man of my age without a solid foundation for such a belief, I will enter into a few details concerning my family, which will convince you I am not so much to be envied as many people must suppose."

"Your Grace does me infinite honour," said de Melac; "I need not say how lively an interest I take in all that concerns you;" and instantly took his seat close to the bed side.

Bertrand, it has been already observed, had made many remarks similar to those which induced the Duke to be thus communicative to a man he had so lately become acquainted with; and being perfectly

familiar with the unfortunate events his Grace alluded to, was almost as anxious to see what effect the recital would produce upon the Receiver General; he therefore seated himself where he could watch every turn of his countenance; and the Duke began as follows.—

CHAP. III.

“MY mother, whose excellent qualities I shall not now expatiate on, was the only daughter of the Marechal de St. Firmin: she was educated at the abbey of Conflans, and at seventeen left that retreat to accompany the young Duke de St. Piene to the altar: my father I never saw, but was early taught
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to revere his memory, and may say it has ever given me the greatest pleasure to be told, as I grew up, how much I, in every respect resembled him; having been early accustomed to believe he had not his equal, at least in my mother's and grandfather's eyes. Yet I cannot presume to accuse them of partiality, for no man was more universally respected and beloved; the tears his loss cost my mother are irrefragable proofs of his worth. During seven months they lived in a state of the most perfect conjugal felicity. The Dowager Duchess de St. Piene was, nay is, still living; but was at that time too much a woman of the world to be sensible of the blessing which had fallen to her share. Since his marriage, but particularly so about the period I mentioned, my father was excessively disturbed by the unbearable insolence of his steward, an elderly man, infinitely more feared than beloved among his household; still, his integrity was looked upon by the Duke as indisputable, as he had lived in the family before he was born; his insolence

really grew insupportable, and could not be attributed to either his age or infirmities. My father mentioned to his mother the insults he daily received, and his intentions to discharge Joinville, if he did not alter his behaviour: the Duchess always found some excuse for the wretch, appeased her son for the moment, and induced him to postpone parting with him, on finding such a step would not meet his mother's approbation; but one fatal day Joinville exceeded all his former insolence; and in the most impertinent, even rude manner, absolutely refused to obey some orders my father had gave him. Few men had more command of themselves than the Duke de St. Piene; but there are provocations would ruffle the temper even of an anchoret; and to submit any longer to such usage, would be an encouragement to such a fellow to persevere in his unjustifiable behaviour; he therefore told him very calmly to leave his presence and the house immediately; as he was now determined to let him know he was master of it, and had resolved

resolved, even the solicitations of his mother, were she still inclined to support him, should not prevent his dismissal. Joinville was rather struck by my father's resolute manner, and seemed to have gone greater lengths than he intended; yet, unwilling to retract, and conscious of his power, he laughed contemptuously, and told my father not to be too secure, lest he found himself involved in his disgrace. The Duke, still more provoked, threatened if he did not instantly obey him, he would chastise him for his insolence, old as he was. Joinville, by no means intimidated, merely said, 'Do your worst, young fellow! you are in my power; and no more whom you suppose yourself to be, than I am! you are not a Duke—do I speak intelligibly now?' Looking round as he concluded, as if fearful of being overheard, though he had said this almost in a whisper;—Astonished, staggered, and hardly believing he had understood the vile wretch, my father, for some seconds, remained motionless, till Joinville repeated

his words, adding, in a still lower tone, ' Not to keep you in useless suspense, young man—know you are my son—judge therefore how little right you have to exert the obedience of your father; and if ever you forget yourself as you have done to day, I will disclose this secret, which has lain very heavy upon my mind for some years, to the whole world, and reduce you by one word to a level with myself !

“ Your feeling heart, my dear de Melac,” said the Duke, affected by the painful recollection, “ may enable you to judge what my father felt at such a moment; he had not been married ten months, and his wife, whom he now adored, expected daily to lie in. For some minutes his mind was a chaos; instant annihilation would have appeared a blessing ! I merely repeat his own confession to my grandfather; but a little time brought him to his senses, and recollection induced him to doubt the truth of the old wretch’s assertions : he communicated his thoughts to the vile de Joinville, swearing if he did not prove beyond a doubt

a doubt what he had chose to advance, he should have reason to repent having dared to utter, as long as he lived, a falsehood of so deep a dye!

“ With the most consummate hypocrisy the old fellow now affected to pity my father, and assured him he attributed his doubts and last threats to the agitation of his mind upon such a discovery; ‘ but it is no longer my intention to keep you in the dark respecting your real origin, my son.’—My father shuddered at the appellation, and the villain thus proceeded:—‘ nor of the reasons which induced me to connive at the deception the Duchess Dowager de St Piene, your supposed mother, chose to put upon her husband’s family: you are my son by an opera dancer, for I never was married; and were born on the same day with the young Marquis de Franval, whom you have for such a number of years represented. The late Duke de St. Piene died before his son was six months old; strong convulsions in cutting

ting his teeth, carried off his son a few days afterwards; and to make short of my story, to secure the property to the Duchess Dowager, you were by her desire substituted in his place, and have from that moment been brought up, and looked upon as the young Duke:—you now know how much you are in my power; yet you must suppose I have your interest very much at heart, and you may depend upon my discretion: if you chuse to promise to be wholly guided by me in future, I will henceforward treat you with the respect that would be due to the person you represent.'

"Every doubt was now eradicated from my ill-fated father's mind; he had listened in silence to the horrid tale; and in addition to his other misfortunes found, as he supposed, he owed his existence to a most abandoned villain, and a common prostitute: as he did not make the wretch any answer, when he ceased speaking he left him, saying, 'You will not want much time for reflection, I should suppose, young man;—remember
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your future destiny depends upon yourself—you know upon what conditions you may insure both my discretion and respect.'

"My father was the soul of honour, therefore, as the vile Joinville observed, he wanted but a very short time to decide how he ought to act; great minds are ever superior to the strokes of fortune. His first intention was to reveal the horrid secret to my mother, and abide wholly by her decision; but her situation, and the dread he now felt she might, through excess of love, wish him to make some terms with the wretch his father, prevented him from pouring out his sorrows at her feet; and before he took any other step, he hastened into the Duchess Dowager's apartments; and though I have always despised her, and can hardly even now think of her with common patience, still I have the misfortune to know she is my grandmother."

'Impossible!' exclaimed de Melac, eagerly grasping the Duke's hand which
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lie without side the bed; and then as suddenly checking himself, upon perceiving the Duke's visible astonishment; 'upon my word I beg your pardon—the interest I take, in all that concerns you, makes me strangely forget myself;—but I thought—I understood—I hardly know what I meant to say:—pray proceed, your Grace, and excuse an interruption, the mere result of feelings I never was less master of.'

Every reflection the Duke had made over night, now recurred to him still more forcibly; he pressed de Melac's hand, while he said, "to apologize for the visible interest you take in my sorrowful tale, is surely very unnecessary. My good friend, I may have been too severe in my censures of Madame de St. Piene, for she merely confirmed what she believed in her own conscience to be true;—she acknowledged that soon after her husband's death, Joinville, who then superintended the bringing up of her son, who was nursed at a village near Paris for the benefit of the air,

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in a small house taken for that purpose, arrived at her hotel late in the morning, and requested an immediate private audience—that then without any circumlocution, he informed her of her son's death, and pointed out in the strongest colours what a sufferer she would be in point of fortune by this event. Very much attached to the gay world, the loss of the splendid income she must have enjoyed, at least for many years, had her son lived, flung her into the most violent paroxysms of grief. Joinville, taking advantage of her weakness, ventured to propose substituting his own son in the place of the young Duke. She listened with guilty eagerness to the base proposal, and gave the wretch such encouragement to execute his vile plan, that he ventured to say he had already done the deed, merely through his wish to serve her—that he would be answerable for the nurse's directions; and the young Duke's illness had been concealed from the other maid servant, who had been dismissed the day he died. He then presented

presented all the advantages likely to accrue to her from this deception : she would always have the young man in her power, and might make her own terms with him when he attained to years of discretion. Thus the unfortunate woman said she had been led on to connive at his iniquity ; yet appealed to my father if she had ever taken an unfair advantage of his situation, but vented her indignation in the strongest terms against her accomplice, for daring to reveal their joint secret without her permission, and assured my father he had nothing to fear from his indiscretion, as such a discovery must prove his own ruin ; nay, were the late Duke de St. Piene's relations so inclined, would bring him to the scaffold ; therefore all now to be done was, to refer him totally to her ; she would make it worth his while to retire quietly upon a handsome annuity, and thus the whole matter might be hushed up. My father heard all she had to say, and when she ceased speaking, told her she should very soon know his determination. The advice she

she had given him seemed to her so reasonable, that she had not a doubt of his conforming to her wishes. Nothing was, however, further from my father's thoughts; he had determined before he saw her, if she confirmed her accomplice's story, instantly to relinquish a title and estate he withheld so unjustly from its lawful owners. The past, it was not in his power to recall; and it was true, by this means he should expose his father; but he was punishing a villain, and doing an act of justice in the eyes of heaven. As for Madame de St. Piene, whom he despised still more than the vile Joinville, because she was not even actuated by such (if any there could be for such a deception) excusable motives; she must therefore abide by the consequences of her own iniquity. It was now in his power to clear himself to his own satisfaction: no one could blame him for the past, and the future depended upon himself. Fortified by the innate integrity of his own disposition in his first determination, he set out for the Marechal de St.

St. Firmin's; his altered countenance and visible agitation announced the importance of his errand before he spoke; and a very few words sufficed to disclose the horrid secret. Fortunately, few were greater slaves to etiquette, or more zealously conscious of the honour of their family, than the Marquis: to learn therefore that he had bestowed the heiress of one of the most noble and most ancient houses in France, upon the base-born son of a hireling domestic, and an abandoned woman, did not dispose the haughty Marechal to treat my father's noble confession, as such generous frankness deserved. Every virtue he had been the first to acknowledge in the Duke de St. Piene, vanished the moment he became acquainted with the lowness of his origin; he remembered he had always been too free with his inferiors; and every action that had before excited praise, now seemed more deserving of censure. After a short pause, in a tone, which all those who were best acquainted with the Marechal de St. Firmin, must have known him at times assume."

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The Duke here fixed his piercing eyes upon de Melac while he said this, wishing to discover whether he had been personally acquainted with the Marechal. The Receiver General changed his posture to avoid his earnest gaze, and the Duke, unwilling to distress him, withdrew his eyes, and thus proceeded:—

“ Few people could treat their inferiors, when they chose it, with more *hauteur* than the Marechal; therefore, turning to my unhappy father, whose manly fortitude upon this trying occasion he has since extolled with the admiration it deserved, thus addressed him—‘ You have done very right young man, still you have done no more than any other honest man would have done in a similar situation: but the honour of my house is dearer to me even than life! I have been grossly deceived by a most unprincipled woman! for I don’t mean to blame you; indeed you will be a still greater sufferer by her iniquity; for you
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must suppose I cannot permit you to retain the title of *my son-in-law* ; such a deception will enable me, to procure a dissolution of your marriage.'

" The Marechal paused a moment, to see what effect his decision would have upon my father, who had foreseen what would be his determination, therefore was in some measure prepared for this speech. As he made no answer, the Marechal went on :

' For the present, in consideration of her situation, I should not chuse my daughter should be made acquainted with the extent of her misfortunes ; indeed I mean, if possible, to prevent your origin from being generally known, for the sake of her child ; not that I mean it should ever inherit the honours you have hitherto borne ; but I will fend for the next hear to the title and estates, your supposed uncle, he is a very good kind of man, and it is proper he should be consulted immediately upon a matter so
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nearly concerns him ; and between us I have no doubt, we shall be able to settle some plan likely to prove satisfactory to all parties.

‘ You have always lived upon terms of friendship with the Marquis de St. Hermine, and notwithstanding the great loser he has been for such a number of years, as he must be convinced of your innocence from your present acknowledgement, he will, no doubt, wish to serve you in some way or other. I also mean to be your friend, if you don’t oblige me to alter my intention ; but I trust you are sufficiently aware of my power, if you don’t conform in every respect to my wishes. I know not what might be the consequence of your seeing my ill-fated daughter in your present state of mind ; therefore you must not leave the room you are now in without my permission ; and if you cannot give me your word of honour to comply with my request, I shall be under the disagreeable necessity of placing a guard over you.’

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De Melac once more changed his posture, and got rather more behind the curtain, while his Grace, who watched every movement, thinking it might appear odd to him he should be able to enter into such minute details, said, "I have heard this part of my father's story so often repeated by the Marechal, and was always so much interested in the recital, I have almost got it by heart."

"My father replied to the Marechal's last speech, that as he had voluntarily put himself in his power, he must suppose he meant in every respect to conform to his wishes; only hoped he would endeavour, as much as possible to soften the afflictions of a woman he must ever love; he should have looked upon his own misfortunes as trifling, had she not been involved in them. As for the child she expected hourly to be delivered of, no one was more capable of superintending its education than herself, if she survived
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its birth ; if not, he could only recommend it to the Marechal, if he was to be denied the consolation of bringing it up himself. The Marechal, rather softened by his ready acquiescence to his wishes, and the general tenor of his behaviour, assured him neither his child nor himself should want a friend while he lived, renewing his request, in rather polite terms, that he would not quit the room he was then in till he returned ; however, such were his prejudices, that he no longer placed the least reliance upon my father's honour, therefore actually fastened both doors after him, and gave private orders to his valet to see he did not make his escape.

“The Marechal havnig previously ordered his carriage, drove immediately to the Lieutenant's of the Police, and instantly obtained an order for securing the old villain, who had so basely imposed upon him.

“Joinville, little suspecting what was going forward, had been summoned into the

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Dowager

Dowager Duchess's apartment the moment my father left her, and very severely reproached for his imprudence and, in many respects, breach of faith. He had already repented having gone such lengths, and had agreed, by way of making his peace with his now enraged accomplice, to retire to a small seat she had in Languedoc upon a handsome annuity. With these agreeable tidings she meant to greet my father upon his return home, having learned he was gone out on foot, without leaving word where.

“The Marechal no sooner obtained the order, than he sent a small party of the Marechaussée to put it into execution, and gave them instructions how to act. One of them, purposely dress’d ** en bourgeois*, was dispatched to the hotel de St. Piene, which is in the faux-bourg St. Henoré, and was to ask for Mr. Joinville, and to tell the old wretch, he came from a gentleman who wished to speak with him upon business of the utmost importance,

** Like a citizen.*

and

and was waiting for him at an obscure coffee-house upon the Boulevards du Temple, whither he was to conduct him. As the Marechal presumed he might enquire what sort of a person this gentleman was, he gave the archer an accurate description of my father, particularly how he was dressed. The man found him at home, delivered his message, and having described the person supposed to have sent him, the old man hastened away with his companion, exulting as he went, to think his iniquitous scheme had succeeded so well; but his triumph was of short duration; for the moment he reached an unfrequented spot, which had been agreed upon, the other archers came up, produced their orders and their carabines, at the same time assuring him he was a dead man, if he made the least resistance: the Marechal, fearful he would be more communicative to his guards than he wished, was within a few paces when he was seized, immediately came up, ordered him to be instantly gagged, and conveyed with all speed to the castle of Vincennes.

cennes. The Marechal had chosen this prison for his retreat, because one of his most intimate friends was the then governor, and would, he knew, see any orders he might give respecting the prisoner strictly enforced. Thither therefore the old villain was conducted, and safely lodged; and the exempt who commanded his little escort, was the bearer of a letter from the Marechal to the Governor, intreating he might be placed in one of the most solitary dungeons the castle afforded; and neither permitted to speak or write to any one. As Vincennis was so near Paris, the Marechal thought he should always have it in his power to see whether he was punctually obeyed. As soon as he had seen Joinville upon the road to his prison, he proceeded to the Hotel de St. Pierne, and requested an immediate audience of the Dowager Duchess, who little aware of the impending storm, received him with her accustomed politeness; for, judging my father after her own heart, the Marechal de St. Firmin was the last person she supposed

he

he would have chosen for a confidant upon this occasion; nor indeed did she at all dread his disclosing a secret it was so much his interest to keep.

“She was, however, very soon undeceived, as the Marechal entered upon the business that had brought him, without much ceremony; nor was he at all sparing in the reproaches her duplicity certainly deserved. Ashamed and mortified beyond description, the Dowager could frame no excuses likely to justify her conduct in the Marechal’s eyes; and voluntarily offered to expiate the criminal fraud she had connived at, by any penance he might chuse to impose upon her, either public or private. The Marechal seized this favourable moment to make her absolutely subservient to his will: taking up a small crucifix which stood in the room, he swore in the most solemn manner, if ever she suffered the secret her vile accomplice had just disclosed, to pass her lips, he would the moment it came to his ears, have her confined

fined for life in one of the strictest convents France afforded: as for her confidential steward, his punishment in this world was already began; and you must know, Madamé, your rank would be of little avail in such a case; indeed crimes like your's are ever discovered, sooner or later. My father, though fallen a martyr to her duplicity, had not told the Marechal of the wish she had expressed, still to keep his real birth a secret; he only said, she had not been able to deny the truth of the steward's assertions.

“To be merely ordered to keep a secret, the disclosure of which must totally blast her own fame, was so easy a task, the Dowager hardly credited the evidence of her ears, having expected nothing less than being forced immediately to retire into some convent; and ten minutes before would have thought being allowed the choice of her retreat a very great lenity; but still dreading the Marechal had some punishment in reserve for her, she confessed her guilt in the

most

most contrite terms, declared she had frequently repented having acted so base a part, and did not believe she should have been allowed to quit this world with so important a secret upon her mind; and concluded by falling upon her knees, and swearing upon the crucifix to conform in every respect to the Marechal's will,

'Then remember, madam,' said the haughty Peer, 'you are never to disclose the secret of your supposed son's birth; and are to mourn with every outward semblance of material grief for his supposed death, which you will soon learn:—you are never to make, or cause any enquiries to be made, as to what is really become of either him or your partner in iniquity, who ought, was I to act up to the rigour of the law, to perish upon a scaffold! You will confirm the story I mean now to tell my daughter, that her husband is gone into the country upon business of mine; she will in a very short time return to my hotel, and you will deliver this

up

up to the man you have so long deprived of his title and property; I shall equally engage him to keep your abominable deception a secret; and you must now endeavour to content yourself with your jointure;—nay, were I in his place, you should give that up, and retire into some obscure retreat upon an annuity just sufficient to keep you above want; however, he will not deprive you of what your worthy husband left you; little supposing how you would impose upon his heirs; and I should not wonder if Joinville was the actual murderer of his son, to promote his own spurious offspring:—think, in that case, what you have to answer for; once for all remember, you will be permitted to enjoy your dower, upon the conditions I have imposed upon you; and as you are an adept in dissimulation, I have no doubt but you will perform your part *a merveille*. The Dowager, compleatly humbled, now a real penitent, renewed her promises in the most solemn manner; and the Marechal, rather more satisfied

satisfied to think he now had both her and Joinville so completely in his power, took his leave of her, and proceeded to his daughter's apartments; these apartments were in one of the wings of the house, and overlooked the garden and pleasure grounds, she had therefore not heard her father's carriage drive into the court, nor did she know he was in the house till he entered her dressing-room."

De Melac instantly raised his head, which was leaning upon his hand, and seemed almost afraid to breathe lest he should lose a word. The Duke made a momentary pause, then thus resumed. "Few people were more completely masters of the science of dissimulation, notwithstanding what he had said to Madame de St. Piene, than my grandfather. He enquired as usual after my mother's health, told her he was come to intreat her pardon for having sent her husband a little way into the country upon some business of importance; he happened to be with me
when

when I received a letter which required either mine or some confidential friend's attendance at the Chateau de St. Firmin; he offered his services; and as the business he went upon admitted no delay, I hurried him off in my post chaise, without allowing him to return home, promising to wait upon you and his mother with his *adieu*: he won't be absent more than three days at farthest. My mother, perfectly deceived by his manner and assurances, seemed happy my father had been able to spare the Marechal a fatiguing journey, and presuming, from what he had said, the business was rather of a secret nature, asked no questions; indeed few of her sex are so free from curiosity. After a short visit, my grandfather took his leave, and hastened home; the Marquis de St. Hermine was waiting his return, and soon made acquainted with the reasons that had induced my grandfather to send for him, and how he had acted in consequence of this strange discovery. The Marquis was extremely surprised, and not near so much pleased

pleased as my grandfather supposed he would have been; for he had long been very much attached to his supposed nephew, and could not forbear lamenting his hard fate, though he saw the necessity of now taking possession of what so justly belonged to him. The Marquis is a very good man, but not distinguished by any shining talents; he therefore referred every thing to the Marechal, who said they must, in the course of a few days, propagate a report of my father's having been killed in a duel: after which he would discover a flaw in his daughter's marriage settlement, that would oblige him in honour to restore her husband's estates and title to the Marquis for his life; and if they subscribed to this arrangement, what could the world have to say?—they might wonder, but as they would never be trusted further with the real mystery, that would be of little consequence: and if the child, of which my mother was then pregnant, proved a female, she must be provided for, and bear the name de St Pierre: if a boy, the Marquis must leave him his title and estates

tates at his death, having no near relations, and being a knight of Malta.

“The Marquis readily agreed to every thing, as it certainly would have been in the Marechal’s power to have kept him out of his fortune, had he been so inclined. Having thoroughly arranged their plan, and settled what they should say to the unfortunate victim of Madame de St. Piene’s and Joinville’s crimes, they went into the room where the Marechal had left him; conscious (as my grandfather has after told me) he had done his duty, and supported by religion, and the consoling reflection, that he had not hesitated one moment to sacrifice his fortune to his honour. My father seemed to wait his sentence with the utmost resignation and fortitude. The Marechal spoke first, and told him, ‘that contrary to his first resolution, he had disclosed the fatal secret to his unfortunate daughter, and who, like himself, saw the necessity of her ill-fated marriage being immediately dissolved.’ My father’s
expres-

expressive countenance, the Marechal has often told, convinced him he gave very little credit to his last assertion; and he protested he blushed to think how grossly he was endeavouring to deceive him; he therefore hastened to tell him, both the Marquis and himself thought it absolutely necessary he should immediately leave the kingdom, under the name he was entitled to bear, or any other he might chuse to assume, but must never attempt to see his wife again. The Marquis added, that if he chose to comply with their joint desire, he would, in the course of a few hours, present him with a hundred thousand crowns,* to enable him to settle comfortably in any part of the globe; but if he refused to comply, he must not wonder if they had recourse, much as they were averse to the idea, to more rigorous measures. They intended to give out among their friends, to account for his being

† Four thousand pound sterling.

missing.

missing, that he was confined for some state offence. often told convinced him he gave no offence, and he was released.

“Since he was no longer to enjoy the society of the woman he so ardently adored, my father said all countries were alike to him. He would have refused the Marquis’s offers had it not brought tears into the good man’s eyes. It was therefore settled he should be immediately put in possession of the before-mentioned sum; he then asked the Marechal how he had left his beloved daughter, whom he no longer dared call by a more tender name?”

“The Marechal was thoughtful, and before he made any reply to his question, had resolved upon a plan he thought would exactly suit his purpose. ‘I don’t wish to add to your afflictions; try to reconcile yourself to your fate. You won’t be very badly off with what the Marquis, or rather the Duke, intends to do for you.’”

My

“My father knew he had no alternative but to conform to their will, or end his days in a dungeon. As he had but little indulgence to expect, he declared he was ready to set out immediately; this did not meet with the Marechals approbation, the next afternoon would be soon enough. The Marquis could not instantly furnish him with the money, they therefore proceeded privately to the Marquis's hotel, as it had been agreed my father should pass the night there. They were kind enough to allow him to sit down to supper with them, though he had repeatedly begged leave to decline the honour, and it may be supposed was very little inclined to eat. In the midst of their meal the Marechal was hastily called out of the room; he affected surprise so well, my father was completely his dupe this time. He returned to them in the course of a few minutes, wished the Marquis a good night, saying indispensable business, that must be attended to, called him away. The Marquis seemed astonished, but being really low spirited,

spirited, soon conducted my father into a bed room adjoining his own, and took leave of him for the night.

“ Little disposed to rest, my unfortunate father did not even make the attempt ; and the Marquis, early next morning found him pacing, what might in some respects be deemed his prison, and revolving how to form his future plans. The Marquis appeared before him with a very sorrowful countenance, and after a little preface, declared, he was shocked to find himself under the disagreeable necessity of adding to his afflictions ; he must remember, the Marechal’s having been sent for in such haste over night, and the hurry he was in to obey the summons ;—alas, it proved a dreadful one ! He went to his poor ill-fated daughter !—— The Marquis made a sudden stop, as if fearful of proceeding ; when my father said very calmly, ‘ to hear my wife has not survived the shock I am convinced the Marechal’s communication gaye her, will neither
surprise

surprise me, nor add to my sorrow. Marquis, I know how much she loved me, and how much she would have deplored my unfortunate destiny!—Pray speak out Marquis, I am prepared for the worst!

‘I commend your fortitude, and wish the Marechal bore his loss with half your resignation: his daughter was taken in labour soon after he left her; was delivered of a son about two hours after he was sent for, and expired in a few minutes, and her child did not survive her many hours.’

“The hero, for such both my mother, grandfather, and myself have ever deemed my father, imagined he was prepared even for this dreadful confirmation of his expectations, but the man sunk under so severe a trial; he fell senseless on the ground, as the Marquis concluded his horrid tale.” “Believe me, I can, even now, hardly forgive either the Marechal or my uncle for thus wantonly, I may say, playing upon the feelings of so good a man; and at such a moment

ment when his heart must have been already almost broken ! it was down right cruelty, and so I have often told them both.' But the Marquis declared If my father had not speedily recovered, and had not appeared in a very short time perfectly resigned, he should have acknowledged the whole was a fiction, and that his wife was still in ignorance, and ever meant to be kept so, of his birth, and intended exile : yet, perhaps all was intended for the best, and this horrid tale might reconcile my father to the thoughts of leaving France. He assured the Marquis it did in a great measure, and again declared himself ready to set off, and asked if he was first to see the Marechal ? No ; the Marquis said it would only be renewing their grief, presented my father with the money he had promised him, procured him a change of dress, and a small stock of linen, and every other necessary the shortness of the time would allow, and in the dusk of the evening saw him enter a cabriolet, attended by an exempt of the police under the disguise of

a servant. This was a precaution my grandfather had thought necessary in case my father did not chuse at last to quit the kingdom; and if he proved refractory when they reached Nantes, the post my father had fixed upon, the exempt was to make himself known to the commandant and have him detained till my grandfather's further pleasure could be known.

“How often has the Marechal blamed himself for this precaution, and for venturing to doubt my father's honour, who never stopped except for a few minutes to take a little necessary refreshment, till he reached Nantes; and immediately made enquiries what vessels were upon the point of sailing; one bound for St. Domingo was expected to sail with the first fair wind, and my father instantly agreed with the Captain for his passage; embarked within an hour after he reached Nantes, and sailed that very evening with a very fair wind. Such was the news the exempt brought my grandfather: it is very certain

certain he made no stay, if he even landed at St. Domingo, as neither the French nor Spanish Governors of that island have ever been able to discover his retreat ; nor has he ever been heard of from that time to this ; notwithstanding the most diligent enquiries ; but unhappily these enquiries were not set on foot till many years after he left France ; and he might, alas ! be no more at the time they were begun. — With such a doubt upon my mind—judge, my dear Sir,—what my anxiety has, and ever will be, respecting this most amiable, truly unfortunate author of my being ; but, to return to my mother, who is almost, nay perhaps more to be pitied, as my father certainly supposes her dead ; and he may be now languishing in want, as she often says, starving in a prison in a foreign country ; in short, I cannot repeat the horrid images she sometimes conjures up ; and often does she think the most dreadful certainty would almost be preferable to our joint state of suspense. This is wandering strangely from my subject, my dear friend, the Duke
continued,

continued, and depressing your spirits with my own disheartening conjectures:—you know I told you a fatality attended my birth; and when I tell you I was born on the very night my father embarked for the West Indies, banished by the crimes and repeated duplicity of one of the greatest villains in the world, from all he held dear upon earth, you will allow I literally spoke the truth. Both my mother and I did very well, and for near three weeks she was amused by various excuses, the Marechal fabricated daily, to account for my father's absence; at the end of that time, she grew so seriously uneasy, he found he could no longer keep her in suspense; she was therefore, with the utmost precaution, informed her husband had been killed in a duel with some unknown adversary: the farce of a mock funeral had actually been performed to deceive the world in general; and all the household, except my mother's particular attendants, had been put in mourning: the Dowager had also played her part to the Marechal's satisfaction, and
declared,

declared, as soon as her daughter in law was recovered from her lying-in, her intention of retiring into a convent; but my mother, like her unfortunate husband, had nearly fallen a sacrifice to my grandfather's plan to deceive her and the world; for six months she was almost deprived of reason;—the thoughts of me alone attached her to life; and my grandfather, compleatly softened by her sufferings, has repeatedly declared, had he thought this unfortunate couple were so sincerely attached to each other, he would never have separated them; and I became almost his idol; and I must do him the justice to say he did all in his power to console my mother, and make me amends for the loss I had sustained through his mistaken notions of honour. As soon as my mother was capable of being removed, she was established in the Hotel de St. Firmin, and the Marquis put in possession of the title of St. Piene and the annexed estates; and I bore the second title of the St. Firmin's family. The loss of her husband's fortune did

did not give my mother a moment's concern; she knew I should be sufficiently rich when my grandfather died; and her own wants were circumscribed indeed! and the Marechal settled half his revenue upon her immediately. I have already told you she superintended my education, and how she fulfilled every maternal duty. Nothing material occurred till I had reached my twelfth year: my mother and myself, with my governor, and a small suite of domestics, had for some years occupied a small house within a league of Paris: the best masters the capital afforded attended me daily; and as we had an excellent and extensive garden, she thought this retreat conducive both to my health and improvement: her amiable first friend Madame de Neufpont and my grandfather were our sole visitors.

“About the period I mention, one evening in the month of June, I was reading to my mother in a small pavillion at the end of our garden; when we saw my grandfather enter
by

by a door we had in view; he was growing old, and various infirmities had rendered him very feeble; he therefore always walked with the assistance of a small crutch stick, and generally very slow; but my mother interrupted me by exclaiming, "Good heavens! what can be the matter? I have not seen my father walk so quick for some years:" I looked up, and saw him advancing with the utmost speed: we were rising to meet him, but his haste, and the wildness of his looks, seemed to have rivetted my mother to the spot where she stood: he flung himself into a chair, looked at each by turns, and endeavoured to speak, but his voice was inarticulate, and he was breathless through the unusual exertions he had made; we each seized a hand, and intreated him to explain the cause of his agitation: the first word he uttered distinctly was,—“ I am the most miserable being upon earth;” then fixing his eyes upon my mother,—“ My dearest Helesene!—my child!—the comforter of my old age!—it was I who occasioned all

your sufferings;—I who deprived you of one of the best of husbands: no, France never produced his equal in any respect:—I deprived you, my darling Adolphus, of a father your every look and action constantly reminds me of; and you have many times, my child, smote me very unintentionally for my cruelty, nay, barbarity towards that best and most injured man: Then, to our still sreater consternation, though both my mother and I were half petrified, he sunk upon his knees, and with a fervour which will never be obliterated from my memory any more than the expression of his countenance, at that awful moment, with uplifted hands and eyes, preferred the following prayer to the throne of mercy:—‘Almighty God! grant me but life to repair my criminal errors; and the rest of my days shall be devoted to penitence, and the service of the poor.’ With our joint assistance, though our agitation now almost equalled his own, (as till this moment my mother and myself firmly believed my father had been killed as

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reported) he rose and resumed his seat, remained silent for a few seconds, then exclaimed, 'but that wicked, deceitful woman, Madame de St. Piene, has even more to answer for than myself.' My mother had too early learnt the hard task of bearing sorrow with some degree of equanimity to be totally deprived of her presence of mind; she therefore, with a calmness she could assume, and to disguise feelings which were never more painful, intreated the Marechal to explain himself. 'I have already told you, my child, it was I,' hurried on by the most mistaken zeal, 'who deprived you of the man you so tenderly loved, and whose loss you have never ceased to deplore:—had I acted with any degree of prudence, I might have spared us all years of sorrow; but, my Helesene, I have still hopes—and still flatter myself, I may be able to repair the wrongs I have done you both.'

'Can it be possible, my dear father,' said my now almost enraptured mother, 'that

‘that my long regretted husband still lives?—Oh! why was I thus cruelly deceived—relieve my anxiety—explain yourself, my dear Sir—conceive what my feelings are.’

“My grandfather, struck with her earnestness, by way of giving ease to her bursting heart, assured her in the strongest terms it was very possible, nay more than probable, she would again be blessed with her husband’s presence. A violent flow of tears came to her relief; and having drank a glass of water I had ran to fetch, she once more begged the Marechal to proceed: he therefore, briefly as possible, recapitulated what I have already, though infinitely more in detail, related to you: it would be impossible to attempt giving you an idea of either my mother’s or my own feelings during a recital which made us both look upon my father as more than mortal. When he had brought the story down to this period, he thus proceeded;—‘That worst of all villains, that old Joinville, who has been for this last twelve years in strict

confinement at Vincennis, has many times, during the short visits the governor of that castle paid him, intreated in the most abject terms, to be allowed to see me, always swearing he had a secret of the utmost importance to mine and your welfare, my child, to disclose to me. The governor seldom paid any attention to what he said, but wearied by his continual importunities, and thinking at all events I ought to be acquainted with the wretches' wish, mentioned it to me about two years ago; I put a decided negative upon the request, thinking the old rascal merely wished to endeavour to deceive me again: however, about six weeks ago, the Governor paid me a long visit, and declared he firmly believed the old fellow had some secret of importance upon his mind, and intreated I would see him, if only for ten minutes, protesting he should think me very much to blame if I did not comply with his request: I had almost determined to visit the castle the next day, but was, as you must remember, taken ill with the rheumatism; during

during my confinement the Governor's representations made a very strong impresson upon my mind, and I resolved to see Joinville as soon as I was able. This very morning, the Governor sent me a note to inform me, the wretch was really very ill; and to entreat I would not refuse to comply with the pressing intreaties he never ceased to make, to see me, and assured me he did not find the old man entertained the slightest expectations of being liberated, and really believed he meant to disburthen his conscience of some crime I was probably not yet acquainted with. Upon receipt of this letter, I set out for Vincennis, called upon the Marquis de St. Hermine, no longer Duke de St. Piene:—here my mother interrupted the Marechal to intreat he would explain his meaning.—‘ That your injured and long exiled husband, my child, whether living or not, was the real Duke de St. Piene, I have had ——’

At that time de Melac, who had been particularly attentive to the latter part of

the story, started from his chair and hastened out of the room, rushed into the garden, and with equal speed towards a small arbour out of sight of the windows. The Duke, seriously alarmed and agitated by a thousand confused notions, sent Bertrand after him, who saw him as he came in sight of the arbour just rising from his knees. Bertrand made a sudden stop, but de Melac having heard some one advancing, came out to see who it was. and hastened to meet the surgeon, who remarked his intelligent countenance beaming with delight. Strengthened in suspicions he had begun to form, Bertrand was at a loss what to say, till de Melac, guessing why he had followed him, said, “My dear friend return to the Duke, who must have thought me very rude, and make the best excuses in your power for my abrupt exit; place it to whatever you think proper, and assure him I am all impatience to hear the end of his truly interesting story. I will follow you immediately, my strange, unaccountable, unguarded speeches and
beha-

haviour I know has often astonished you ; but a short time will, I trust, at least exculpate me from the charge of insanity, to which I should not wonder if you attributed many of my actions. Go in, dear Bertrand, and assure the Duke I am coming."

Bertrand did as he was ordered, and found the Duke in a reverie, revolving in his mind the agitation de Melac had displayed during his recital ; he paid but little attention to the incoherent excuses the disturbed state of Bertrand's mind had allowed him to frame, but hastily asked him if he did not think the Receiver General was more interested in his family history than he chose to acknowledge. Bertrand was at a loss what to say, and was happily relieved from making any answer, by the return of de Melac, who made his excuses for his hasty departure, for which he found very plausible reasons, and seemed in every respect to have recovered his wonted calmness and placidity, intreated the Duke to proceed, saying, "I am anxious to learn

how Joinville convinced the Marechal your father was the real Duke de St. Piene, since even the Dowager Duchess was of a different opinion."

Instead of going on with his story, the Duke said, taking de Melac's hand, "Your feelings at different times, my amiable friend, have convinced me you were not an absolute stranger to many of the events I have related. My father, I have every reason to suppose when he left France, went to the West Indies; there, perhaps you became acquainted, for from him alone you could have learned any part of our strange history; he might not, perhaps, acknowledge himself for reasons very obvious to a mind like yours, for the hero of his tale. But have you any reasons to suppose you ever saw him? Is it in your power to relieve the dreadful anxiety my mother and I have so long felt upon his account? Don't keep me in suspense, my friend, through the mistaken notion of preparing me for agreeable tidings;
I trust

I trust I inherit some of my noble father's fortitude, and am confident it will not fail me when put to the test."

De Melac was in some measure prepared for these natural questions, the mere result of his own agitation, which, notwithstanding the most painful efforts, he had found it impossible to conceal from such observers as the Duke and Bertrand; he therefore said, "I will not pretend to deceive you; I was no stranger to some of the anecdotes you have favoured me with; and it is possible, nay from what you have said, very probable, I had my information from your father."

Bertrand looked disappointed; but the Duke, eagerly grasping the hand he held, said, "Does he still live, my friend? Where, where can I find him?—Where—"

"Let me entreat what I have said, which was merely founded upon conjecture, may not thus agitate your Grace. To give you hopes it may never be in my power to rea-

lize, would be cruel beyond measure ; but I have many friends in Guadaloupe, and through some of them I may, perhaps, be able to trace what is become of the person from whom I many years ago learned part of the story you have been relating ; but these searches and inquiries will require time, therefore display that fortitude you no doubt possess, and endeavour to wait with patience the result of my exertions to serve you. In the mean while let me intreat you would favour me with the heads of the stewards confession, and what was the final result of his last declaration. It is rather material I should be able to transmit all the information in my power upon this subject, to the friend I mean to employ upon this important occasion."

" Undoubtedly, my best friend," said the Duke ; " and we will then concert how we ought to act. You don't know what a weight you have already removed from my heart."

These

These are the heads of Joinville's confession, as near as I can remember,

At the time of my father's birth, he possessed the unbounded confidence of both the Duke and Duchess; but I should observe, that by one of these strokes of Providence we erring mortals often allow to pass unobserved, Madame la Marechale de L'Hotel-sain, the sister of Madame de St. Piene, and who was of course present upon such an occasion, was one of the most superstitious bigotted women perhaps ever known; she had no children, which she solely attributed to some wicked people having cast a spell upon her during her childhood: in short, to this day she believes as firmly as she does in her creed, in witches, forcerers, and a hundred more absurdities; and by way of averting, as she supposed, every evil such beings have in their power to inflict upon us poor frail mortals, she insisted upon marking my father, with a key of little less efficacy, in her opinion, than those in the possession of our Holy Father:

Father: this key she had purchased of a monk, who had taken advantage of her folly, and endowed it with a thousand virtues it evidently never possessed, or my father had now been in France and with his wife and child. He was, however, scarified upon the right shoulder by this pious lady, within a few hours after his birth; and the key was certainly (for I have been favoured with a sight of it) of so strange a form it was not a very easy matter, nor even possible, to imitate with any thing else the mark it made.

“But to return to Joinville:—he had recommended the first nurse who attended my father, whose milk, at the end of a month it was thought, did not agree with the infant; he therefore introduced a younger woman, who had been brought to bed on the very same day with the Duchess, and who was in reality the person he kept, and her character corresponded with his own. It was settled, that her own child should be put out to nurse, and she was sent with her young charge

charge to a small house near Paris, and Joinville was placed over her as a sort of superintendant to see she did her duty, and as he had hinted the necessity of such a precaution. The Duke and Duchess de St. Piene seldom visited their son; and almost immediately after he was entrusted to this vile woman and her still more guilty paramour, they agreed to exchange the children, as by this means they should not only make their son's but their own fortunes; for when he came of age, Joinville meant to make him sensible of his power; and unfortunately my grandmother's dread of being reduced to her jointure only, allowed him to deceive both her and my father, as I have already related. The young Marquis was placed in the hands of a hale peasant near where this loving couple resided, and for some time every thing went on as they could wish. When the young Marquis was about six months old, his father, the Duke de St. Piene died suddenly; and about the same time Joinville's child went off in convulsions. The plan as originally contrived by Joinville and his paramour, was thus frustrated; and
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in order to hold a situation which was so agreeable to them, it was necessary again to re-place the young Marquis, but to keep in ignorance the Duchesse de St. Piene.—They therefore sent to the peasant's for the young child (which had passed for their own) and in the space of two days, informed the nurse of the sudden death of the boy soon after he came home.

“ Thus was my father reinstated in his honours; the mark he bore had never given them a moment's uneasiness, as they meant, had any enquiries been made, if their son had lived, to say it was worn away, and to make a slight cicatrice upon his shoulder, to give credit to their assertion. Deceived in all the sanguine hopes he had formed, Joinville set his fertile brain to work; and having thoroughly penetrated Madame de St. Piene's disposition, ventured to play upon her credulity, as has been already mentioned. She eagerly caught at the proposal of changing the children, and was very happy when she learned it was already done,

and

and that Joinville had, he assured her, contrived to mark his child exactly so like the young Marquis, that it could not be distinguished. Now, had she treated so base a wretch as he deserved, he acknowledged he would have confessed the real truth; thus would she have saved herself and her son many years misery.

“ I think I told you my grandfather took the Marquis de St. Hermine to Vincennis, and the weak old man was unwilling to believe a story which must necessarily deprive him of what was become dearer to him than life; he therefore said this was more likely to be a fiction than the first tale: who was to know whether my father, who would probably never more be found, and was most likely dead, bore the mark which could alone serve to convince him he was son to the Duke de St. Piene? The Marechal was by no means of his way of thinking, as he very justly observed, this confession rather added to Joinville's guilt; though my father was not perhaps in France, he might be found

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“ Joinville, willing as far as lay in his power, to repair the numerous crimes he had committed, said the woman with whom he cohabited, and who had nursed the young Marquis, would put the truth of what he had advanced beyond a doubt, if she was still in being. When he was seized, she kept a small *hotel garnie* in the *Rue Dauphine*; she was immediately sent for, and fortunately was still living in the same house, and was brought from thence to Vincennis, and questioned apart by the Marechal and Marquis, told her accomplice had made his confession, and threatened her with their vengeance if she did not either confute or affirm the story he had advanced, and it was evident they could not have agreed upon what they mutually were to say, and her story tallied in every respect, even in the minutest circumstances with the one Joinville had related. There could no longer exist a doubt of the truth; and the Marechal as eager to recal as he had been to banish my father, almost forced the Marquis to accompany him im-

mediately to Versailles. where the whole adventure was laid before our gracious Monarch, who instantly ordered my uncle to surrender all my father's estates, &c. to me, and to relinquish the title he had borne for the last twelve years, and gave the Marechal orders to cause the strictest enquiries to be made for my much injured father, and advised him to reveal the horrid mystery to my mother.'

" Thus concluded my grandfather's story, and shocked as my mother had been during its recital, the hopes she began to entertain of once more seeing the man she had so fervently adored, made her almost forgive the Marechal. I immediately assumed the title of de Franval; and my mother was put in possession of my father's revenues, which have ever been looked upon as a sacred trust by us both. Year after year rolled on, and we still continued in the same state of suspense. At fourteen I went into the *gens D'armes*, and at eighteen, not to revive my
mother's

mother's grief, and by way of making her some amends for her past sufferings, the King was graciously pleased to create me Duke de Civrac, and to give me the command of a regiment I was permitted to bestow that name upon. My grandfather has been dead six years; he lingered out a miserable existence from the time he heard Joinville's confession, hoping daily to be blessed with the sight of my father; assuring us all he should not die easy if he did not receive his forgiveness: that was denied him: he left me his sole heir; and from the retired life he had led for the last eighteen years, his fortune was greatly encreased. I wished to continue to divide his revenues with my mother: this she would no longer allow; and since she has been in possession of my father's estates, the expences have never exceeded what would have been her jointure, had she, as she long apprehended, been the survivor: as for myself, I am already richer than most of our nobility; yet I may venture to assert that luxuries have had but few charms for me,

me, while I supposed, and that doubt is not yet cleared, my father was in want ; therefore, my dear de Melac, as I have given you all the information in my power, let me intreat you would be equally communicative respecting the person you have given me such room to believe was my long lamented, much regretted father : if you have really any reason to believe he still lives, I will set out immediately for Guadaloupe, though I would not have my mother for the world acquainted with the purport of my journey : another disappointment would indubitably break her heart. I know I shall be able to get leave of absence for a twelvemonth, if necessary. The King has long partially distinguished me ; and when acquainted with my errand, would be the first to hasten my departure.

“ Don’t keep me in suspense, my dear friend,—judge of my anxiety by what your’s would be in a similar situation.”

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De Melac was revolving so many different things in his mind, he hardly attended to the Duke's words; till Bertrand intreated his patient to be calm, and reminded the Receiver-General how necessary it was for him to either raise or depress the hopes he had given; therefore, turning to the Duke, "The gentleman's story whom I have such reason to believe was your Grace's father, tallied in every respect with the one you have described."

"Then he must have been my father," interrupted the Duke de Civrac; "who else could have been so unfortunate?—Proceed, my dear friend, proceed!"

"This gentleman left France about four and twenty years ago; he had evidently lived in the very first circles, and had been blessed with a most amiable wife, whom he supposed had fallen a victim to his mother and steward's duplicity: he quitted his native country by the desire, or rather orders, of the Marechal de St. Firmin; for that name has long been familiar to me; and
only

only wished to hide himself in a desert, if possible, or in any place where he might never be heard of more: all parts of the globe were equal to him; and had Providence so ordered, would as readily set sail for Nova Sembla, as the West Indies. Religion supported him under such complicated misfortunes; and, as your grandfather observed, consciousness that he had done his duty, and when he finds himself blest with such a son, how amply will he be repaid for all his former sufferings. You already know he was very amply provided with money; and the Marquis had forced many other valuable presents upon him: he embarked, as you learnt, on board the first vessel that presented itself, bound for St. Domingo, and landed at Port au Prince; but not liking the island, and fancying his retreat might be discovered by the information of the sailors, he once more committed himself to the winds and waves, and was landed at Guadaloupe, which pleased him much better than St. Domingo. There
he

he determined to take up his abode, and endeavoured to get some employment, knowing nothing was so likely to banish from his mind reflections on the past. Few men certainly ever experienced a greater revolution of fortune in so short a time; luckily he was a tolerable good accomptant, though totally unacquainted with trade, and hoped, with attention, to be soon *au fait* in a counting-house; he placed part of his money in the hands of a very capital planter;—a sufficient recommendation to induce that gentlemen to receive him among his clerks. His assiduity soon gained him the esteem of his master, who gave him every encouragement to persevere in the plan he had adopted. The merchant was an elderly man, though he had but just married a very young woman, the daughter of one of his French correspondents. At the end of two years this gentleman died, leaving his young widow the mistress of all his property, which was very considerable. Involved in business she very little understood, my friend at this time
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at the head of her affairs, promised to exert himself in her behalf, if she chose to continue in trade: she meant to try how it would answer, she said; desiring he would give her in an exact account of what she was then worth; and, at the end of a twelvemonth, she should be better able to decide. My friend applauded her intention; for though very young, she was very prudent; and though her's had been in every respect a marriage of convenience, she had done honour to the connubial state: she possessed an excellent temper and great judgment; and was perfectly qualified to shine in the situation Fortune had placed her in; though not blessed with shining talents, her innate worth made ample amends for that deficiency.

“The year of trial soon slipped away; and on the day it ended, the accounts were put into her hands before she enquired for them: she retired to peruse them, and found the profits more than equalled her expectations; she

she immediately sent for her head clerk, and, to cut my story short, invited him to become her partner, not only in trade, but for life. Thinking himself totally free, and attached to the line he had entered into, my friend, sensible of the honour did him, and equally so of her worth and the purity of her morals, accepted her kind offers.—WE WERE married! and have had three children.”

The Duke started upright in bed, flung his arms round de Melac, exclaiming, “You are my father—my dear and long lost father!”

De Melac, or more properly the Duke de St. Piene, met his son's embrace, and soon convinced him he was not mistaken in his conjectures. Though the young Duke, whom we shall in future distinguish by the name of Adolphus, was in some measure prepared for this happy event, he was not near so much so as his father, who had long been acquainted with their relationship: he was therefore the first to recover, and, alarmed for what might be the consequences of such

such a discovery in his son's invalid state, intreated him to lie down again. This circumstance drew Bertrand, who had long suspected the secret now disclosed, from the window, whither he had retired to give vent to the overflowing of his heart upon so joyful an occasion;—he soon prepared something for his patient, and insisted upon his lying down: Adolphus did as he desired, but declared he wanted no more cordials; he was quite recovered, and would set out for Paris the very next morning..

“Not quite so fast, my dear son,” said the Duke; “allow me to enjoy the blessing Divine Providence has in store for me: if your anxiety to restore me to my wife should deprive us both of a son, it would have been far better we had never met: I shall certainly think every moment an hour till I again enjoy the sight of the woman I so long believed dead; but as she is as much as ever in ignorance of my destiny, a day or two more or less cannot be an object.”

"I have no will but yours, my dear father," said Adolphus; "God forbid I should ever again cause a moment's sorrow to either; but my happiness will not be complete till I see you again restored to my dear mother. But why have you, I may say wantonly, so long retarded that happy event? You must have known I was your son a very short time after we became acquainted."

"But not that I was Duke de St. Piene, my Adolphus; and nothing short of that conviction should ever have made me disclose a secret I was afraid, till within this half hour, would lower you in the eyes of the world. I have, as you observe, long known you was my son; and have never let a day pass since I became thus wise, without pouring out my gratitude to the giver of all goodness for such a blessing. But judge what my reflections have been since I discovered how grossly I had been duped by the the Marechal de St. Firmin and my uncle; they have certainly, though I must freely forgive them, a great deal to answer for; their deception induced me, very innocently as I thought

thought, to enter into a second engagement. Providence is certainly just in all its decrees; for what must have been my feelings had Madame de Melac been now living; though in that case I should most probably never have quitted Guadaloupe. But in what light will my second marriage appear in the eyes of Madame de St. Pienne, particularly when she learns I have another son and two daughters, whose birth will not probably be deemed illegitimate, and whose grandmother cannot boast of her ancestors."

"You wrong my mother, and the world, my dear father," said Adolphus; "your second engagement was the mere result of the accumulated series of deceptions you were made the victim of; your children, whom I am convinced Madame de St. Pienne will look upon as her own, will never be reckoned illegitimate; your rank of course ennobles them, and I shall ever be proud of acknowledging my sisters and brothers. My regard for Ernestine and Clemence has long been of that nature; and I trust this revolution in his prospects will in-

duce you to permit Bazile to enter the service, where a few years will, I have no doubt, make him every thing you can wish."

"May your prophesy be accomplished, my generous Adolphus; but for the present I wish my rank to remain a secret to my other children, and my Dunkirk friends and acquaintance. In a few days our worthy friend here, looking at Bertrand, has assured me you will be able to travel; you would not, I am sure, wish your mother to see you till you have recovered your wonted colour, and those bandages would strangely damp her joy; believe me, as I said before, I am as anxious to see her as you can be to introduce me; and when you can appear without giving her any cause for alarm, I shall be ready to accompany you; a very few days will be sufficient to enable me to settle my affairs at Dunkirk, or rather to put matters in train for delivering up my accounts to my successor. Of my daughters I shall ever be proud, and I trust neither you nor your mother, my Adolphus, will ever have cause to blush for them;

but

but as for Bazile, I am almost tempted to believe sometimes, that like myself, he was changed in his cradle, for he certainly bears no resemblance to either father or mother; I mean to send him to Havre for the present; he has some distant maternal relations there, who have long wished to see us, and a visit to them will amuse him, and keep him out of the way for a time; I should not choose to leave him behind me at Dunkirk; for Heaven knows what follies he might be guilty of while he knew I was at such a distance; my girls will be very safe under the care of Madame de St. Franval."

"Therefore, my good friend Bertrand," the Duke proceeded, taking him by the hand, "I am still the Receiver General; and I believe you can now account for these complaints you acknowledged your skill could not reach. I have certainly had some hard struggles to keep this secret, particularly during our journey to Ypres."

"My dear Adolphus, you sometimes very unconsciously probed my heart to the very quick; but you are now acquainted with my reasons

for not discovering myself sooner, and you must allow I had some merit ; for who would not be proud of the relationship, though I can hardly persuade myself even now I am your father. But my mother, unhappy woman ! she still lives I understand ; where does she reside, and how does she do ? I have long forgiven the Duchess Dowager de St. Piene ; and I could almost find excuses for my mother ; she was very young when she suffered herself to be led astray by the seducing arguments of the specious Joinville ; that fellow was a complete villain, and I hardly know of any punishment adequate to his crimes. But my mother was attached to the pleasures of this world, and what was more natural at her age ; I won't say that put to similar trials, I should have acted as she did, because I trust I have given proofs how much dearer honour was to me than fortune, or every blessing this world could bestow ; still, if she proved unequal to the task when put to the test, I ought to be the first to draw a veil over her frailties, and she will assuredly participate in our general joy."

" I am

"I am certain she will, my dear father. Of late years she has evidently been a true penitent, and voluntarily retired to the *Val de Grace** soon after her secret was discovered to the Marechal and Marquis, and your supposed death afforded her an excellent pretence. I will try to be as charitable as you are, since you are no longer likely to be a sufferer through her weakness; but while I had reason to dread that was the case, I could not have said I forgave her from the bottom of my soul; yet I have frequently visited her of late years, and have often heard her express the most bitter regret upon your account. Her prayers have no doubt been heard; and I don't like to reflect upon the past. We have so much happiness in store for us, we ought only to look forward and anticipate the pleasures we have to come; but for the present, my dear Sir, I wish you would try to get a little rest, I know you must be fatigued."

* Convent founded by Madame de La Valiere, mistress to Lewis the 14th, in the Fauxbourg St. Jaques.

The Duke, to oblige his son, agreed to his request; and once more, when alone, returned his thanks where they were most due, for this wonderful second revolution he had experienced. On the next day a carriage was sent for from Dunkirk, and on the third, Adolphus being sufficiently recovered, they set out upon their return; Bertrand preceded them on horseback. Before he left Rosebrugge, the Duke de St. Piene made every poor heart rejoice, in memory, he said, of the miraculous escape the Duke de Civrac and himself had had. Adolphus was first set down at his own lodgings, where a number of his officers were waiting his arrival, knowing he was expected, and each anxious to express his joy he was so well recovered from the consequences of his dreadful accident. While his happy father went forwards to his own house, he seemed to tread on air, and embraced his daughters with even more than his accustomed tenderness; they had no need to enquire, as they observed, how the Duke de Civrac did, his looks convinced them he was much better; he

he assured them he was very much recovered ; and having paid his compliments to Madame de Franval, and received those of Bazile, he went into his office, soon settled his business there, and returned to spend the evening with his Adolphus.

CHAP. IV.

NEXT morning he told Bazile he intended to send him to Havre de Grace for a month or six weeks ; it was a compliment due to his maternal relations, which could no longer be deferred with any propriety. He could not have made his son a more agreeable proposal ; he had long detested the counting-house, and this journey would release him from that drudgery, at least for a time. At Havre he should have no one to controul
G 5 him ;

him ; he should have an opportunity to exhibit in the character of a fine gentleman ; a character he thought himself so well qualified to shine in.

The Duke had been rather undecided as to how he should allow him to perform this journey. It would soon be generally known he was the younger son to a nobleman ; still he by no means wished to increase Bazile's pride. At last he determined he should go in the Barque to St. Omers, where he had some business for him to transact, and there he was to hire a light cabriolet to proceed from thence post to Havre : to have a servant at his own command was a luxury he had never yet allowed him ; nor did he chuse to send one with him to Havre, where he wished him to appear in every respect like the son of the Receiver General of Dunkirk. Having thus told Bazile his intentions, this wise youth took the first opportunity to fly to his dear Berenger, eager to impart his happy prospects to his faithful

Achates

Achates. This young man had told him only the day before, his master was going to send him into Artois for orders; he was therefore delighted with Bazile's intelligence, and enquired when he set out, as he was going to St. Omers, and in the Barque in four days himself. Bazile's departure had been fixed a day sooner, but they soon agreed he should use a finesse which would enable him to wait for his friend, as they promised themselves excellent fun from this jaunt, particularly if taken in each others company; and Bazile had every reason to suppose, as he told Berenger, his father would come down handsomely upon the occasion. The shoe-maker, therefore, according to the orders, and by way of earning the bribe he had received from Bazile, sent a thousand excuses the over-night of his intended departure, protesting the man who was making his boots had been taken very ill, and thus it would not be possible for him to get them finished before nine o'clock the the next morning, at which hour Bazile

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might

might depend upon having them. The Barque left Dunkirk at seven: this would, therefore, be too late. Bazile, who had purposely had this message brought him in his father's presence, affected passion so well, that the Duke gave him a severe reprimand, and said the business he was going upon was not of such importance to make his setting off a day sooner or later of any consequence.

Suffice it to say, he gained his point, received his father's instructions, and a much larger sum of money than he had expected; took leave of his grandmother with more than usual civility; and promised to deliver various messages she made him the bearer of, very punctually; made his *adieux* to his father and sisters over night; and, at the appointed hour, stepped on board the Bark. Berenger had preceded him, and chose to keep out of sight till they were under way, fearful the Receiver General might accompany his son to see him embark; but he came alone, and having his baggage put on board,

board, sat off in full glee. He was not to stay more than one day at St. Omers, which he was to spend at a friend of his father's, and proceed the morning after, writing an account of the business he had transacted with all expedition to Havre.

The Receiver-General had begun to put his affairs in order, immediately after his return to Dunkirk, preparatory to the journey he was going to take; and in four days after Bazile's departure, was ready to set out. His clerks all received proper instructions; and he told Madame de Franval he should most likely be absent longer than he had given them reason to suppose; but that she would, in that case, have his orders transmitted from time to time.

Adolphus had pretty well recovered the effects of his overturn: a black ribbon, which Bertrand had assured him he might soon leave off, perfectly concealed the wound upon his temple; yet he particularly

cularly intreated the Duke de St. Piene not to suffer his son to travel too fast; as he had every reason to suppose he had received an inward bruise, which he would be answerable, with proper precaution, would be of no consequence, but which might become dangerous, if not attended to. The least idea of danger was more than sufficient to alarm this now truly happy father; and he wished very much to have postponed their departure; but Adolphus was so anxious to be upon the road, and so positive in his assurances that he was quite recovered, that the Duke determined not to restrain his laudable impatience, and agreed to set out at the appointed time. No two people could be happier than the father and son; though the Duke de St. Piene's joy was rather damped at the moment of their departure, by Bertrand's renewing his intreaties they would not hurry too much upon the road; and expressing his hopes that Adolphus would consult with La Martiniere the moment he arrived at Paris.

The

The Duke would have found it as difficult to define the regard he felt for this darling son, as Adolphus did to express the love he bore his truly amiable and deserving mother. Strongly attached to his other children, particularly to his daughters, his Grace was certainly very excusable in giving a superior preference to the son of Madame de St. Piene : the least idea that there was a possibility his late accident might be attended with dangerous consequences, alarmed him beyond expression ; still he flattered himself he should not have the almost overflowing cup of felicity dashed from his lips just as he was once more beginning to taste it. What a subject for reflection did the virtues of this son of his ever dear Helesene afford him !—What a comfort he must have proved to that amiable woman, who seemed to have formed his heart and mind after the model of her own ; yet what an excellent disposition, and what principles he must possess to have thus made, as he appeared always to have done, her will his law. How many young men,
independent

independent as he had been for the last six years, would have paid no attention either to a mother's wishes or advice. He was next struck with the idea of his revenues having always been held sacred by both mother and son, from the hopes they entertained he might yet return to enjoy them; in fact, how great a right both, or either, had to spend them. He therefore determined to convince his Adolphus he had not been deceived in the high opinion he appeared to have formed of his disinterestedness and generosity, by making over one half of his income to him the moment he was reinstated in his hereditary possessions. He knew his son did not want, and was far from requiring such a proof of his regard, but he almost thought it an incumbent duty. The fortune derived from Madame de Melac, and what he had accumulated in merchandize, made him very rich for a private gentleman; indeed his income was infinitely larger than Bazile had even suspected, or he would not have been so amenable to his father as he

was ;

was ; and this part of his wealth the Duke meant to divide between his three younger children.

They slept the first night at St. Ormes ; Adolphus wished to have gone further, but his father could not consent to his proposal ; he had wrote to his mother to let her know he should set out for Paris rather sooner than he had intended, but could not fix the day upon which he was likely to reach that city ; therefore intreated she would not expect him till she saw him. He wrote thus, fearful she would give him the meeting either upon the road, or at his hotel ; and he wished to prepare her by degrees for the happiness that awaited her, dreading what might be the effects of a sudden surprize, much as he longed to present his father to her. The weather was still very warm, but not near so oppressive to the Duke de St. Piene, owing to his long residence in the West-Indies, as to his son ; but, infinitely more anxious about his health and convenience than his
own,

own, he proposed their leaving St. Ormes early the next morning, and lying by, during the heat of the day, at Boulogne. This Adolphus readily agreed to. They had no reason to fear overtaking Bazile, though he was to proceed as far as Abbeville upon the road they were going; for he had wrote to his father word he had finished his business at St. Ormes, and should proceed next day to Havre, where they presumed he was by this time arrived.

During their morning's ride, Adolphus was sometimes thoughtful: this his father remarked, though he was hardly conscious of it himself. A few disagreeable reflections, the result of his late journey to Ypres, would intrude upon his mind: the Duke, wishing to divert his attention, reverted to some past incidents Adolphus was not imperfectly acquainted with, relative to his marriage with his mother.

“ I have always understood, my dear Sir,” said Adolphus, with a smile, “ your’s was a
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marriage of convenience ; yet I have heard you very lately condemn such matches as are not likely to contribute to the felicity of either party."

" And I am still of that opinion, my Adolphus ; though there certainly are exceptions to all general rules. Your mother and myself were one of the happiest couples who ever met at the altar, till fate chose to separate us ; yet, as you observe, our marriage had been planned long before we saw each other."

" Then I certainly have every chance of being happy with Madame de Moncove, whose disposition my mother has helped to form, no doubt, after the model of her own ; and Madame de Neufpont is a most amiable woman : her daughter most likely inherits some of her excellent qualities."

" Still she may be either too grave or too gay, in your opinion ; indeed I have sometimes known the best dispositions on each side not happy when united ; therefore let me advise you to study her temper and inclination with care

care and attention before you lead her to the altar;—don't sign your contract on the night you are introduced to her, and marry her the next evening. This I can assure, I had never seen a woman for whom I had felt even the slightest *preferance*, when I was introduced to Helesene de St. Firmin; and you may judge from the remarks you have been enabled to make, as you grew up, and from what she now is—what your mother was at seventeen: now shall you be able to lay your hand upon your heart and say as much, when presented to Palmira de Moncove?—My question may be too abrupt; but, interested as I am in your future welfare, believe me, it merely arises from the sincere wish I feel to promote it in any, nay in every shape:—remember you selected me for your friend before I dared acknowledge our relationship; and I shall ever glory in the first title; nay, were I obliged to chuse between the two, should prefer it to the last.”

“I shall never separate them, my dear Sir; for mutual confidence is one of the most endearing

dearing ties between parents and children of any age. I was early taught this doctrine ; but really in the present instance I hardly dare scrutinize my heart or my feelings : I have been long, by my own consent, engaged to Palmira de Moncove ; she is beautiful and accomplished ; and what is still more in her favour, my mother has attended, as much as lay in her power, to her education, and certainly would not speak so highly in her praise, if she did not think her deserving such encomiums : the match is looked upon as concluded by all parties. I have most likely been represented in an equally favourable light to the young lady ; indeed my mother has given me to understand *she* has formed a much higher opinion of me than I deserve, owing, no doubt, to the kind manner in which she has ever spoken of me ; but, to answer your question candidly, I have sometimes of late wished I had not gone to Ypres, or at least that I had met Palmira there, as was at first intended, instead of her sister, though I am assured the former is much the most amiable of the two."

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“ I wish she may appear to you in that light, my dear Adolphus; but notwithstanding the high opinion I have of Madame de St. Piene’s judgment, let me intreat you would in this case be wholly guided by your own feelings; but if Palmira de Moncove does not answer the expectations you have formed, or, to speak plain, if she does not rival Ermance in your good opinion, why not declare your sentiments to your mother? —Can you suppose she would wish you to give your hand to one sister after you had bestowed your heart upon the other: she will in either case be equally related to her amiable friend, in whose company I have spent many happy hours; and as you have never been introduced to Madame de Moncove, she will merely suffer in imagination by your defection.”

“ All you say is very just, my dear Sir; and I have already revolved every thing in my own mind: I have thought, were I allowed to chuse, I should prefer Ermance; and am perfectly convinced my mother would
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wish me to follow the dictates of my heart upon such an occasion, and perhaps, were I less certain of being indulged in my wayward fancies, I should be less scrupulous how I gave way to these indulgences; but you know it is a sort of established custom among our nobility, to marry their eldest daughters first;—and what a capricious mortal should I appear in the eyes of Monsieur and Madame de Neufpont, were I to break off a match they suppose upon the eve of being celebrated; and don't accuse me of vanity, Sir, when I say such a step might make the lovely Palmira miserable, though it is very possible she merely feels the same sentiments for me as I do in her favour—those of esteem. My honour is certainly engaged in this affair; and you have convinced me, my dear Sir, that ought to be dearer to me than life itself!—What a sacrifice did not you make at that shrine!—Palmira must fall very short of my mother's description, to induce me to hesitate one moment, situated as we both are; but a very short time will enable me to form
my

my own opinion of her; I shall then be better able to judge of the state of my heart."

I had promised Ermance to visit her at Bourbourg; she will soon learn what prevented me from keeping my word. I must own the discovery I fancied I made, on the morning I left Ypres, did not tend to eradicate the strong impression her artless, nay almost infantine, sweetness of manners had made upon my heart: I am sorry to say I think we parted with equal regret;—but no more of the subject;—I neither like to reflect nor reason upon it at present—reason will, I hope, soon reassume her empire over my mind; the sight of Palmira will very probably restore me to my senses—for love certainly is a species of madness, and lovers in general, it is observed, are always either melancholy or raving; therefore, as you once kindly attempted before, my dear Sir, pray try to prevent my falling into either extreme, by giving way to reflections I wish to banish from my mind."

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The Duke, now perfectly satisfied respecting the state of his son's heart, soon determined he should not refine away his happiness from a too nice sense of honour; but not chusing to dwell longer upon the subject just then, he did not mention his intentions.

CHAP. V.

THEY slept that night at Montreuil, and dined next day at Abbeville. Adolphus was far from being well in the morning, though he would not acknowledge it; but his father was too anxious about him to allow the slightest alteration in his countenance to pass unnoticed: he therefore wished very much to have slept where they dined; but Adolphus recollected a very pleasant, little coun-

try town, only fifteen miles farther, upon their way, where he assured his father they would not only be quieter, but much better lodged in every respect; besides, he always slept much better in the country. The Duke affected to give credit to his reasoning, knowing how impatient he was to reach Paris, and they proceeded to Flixcourt, the name of the village where the inn, Adolphus had mentioned, was situated; it was also the post-house, and remarkably neat for a French *hôtellerie*. The village stands between two very steep hills: travellers, who ride post for a nearer cut, and to avoid the worst part of the farthest hill upon which the house stands, drive through the inn yard. The Duke and his son were shewn into an excellent room, though it had two beds in it; but that is so common a custom in France, that people of the first distinction, when travelling, are seldom accommodated with any other sitting room than their bed-chamber; indeed a parlour or saloon are very seldom to be met with, but at large
hotels

hotels in some of the first towns upon the great roads, frequented by the English, who are more particular in that respect than the French nobility.

They agreed to start at seven the next morning, and proceed to Amiens, the capital of Picardy, before breakfast; they were both up and dressed before the fixed time, and standing at their room door, when an English carriage, followed by two footmen, and which had been preceded by a courier who had got their horses out ready, drove into the yard; and as the servants all assisted, (for French postillions seldom hurry themselves upon such occasions) they soon proceeded on their journey, and in a few seconds the Duke and his son also set off. The three English servants were taking their morning's whet as they drove out of the yard: the carriage they belonged to had not got more than fifty or sixty yards advance upon the Duke's, owing to the steepness of the hill already mentioned, which was more than half a mile long: they had not proceeded a

third of the way, when they were passed by the English servants upon the full canter, and soon heard them laughing most immoderately. As the morning was very fine, and the sun just in their faces, the Duke and Adolphus had let down the spring blinds in the front of their carriage; Adolphus instantly put up the one facing him to discover what had amused these fellows; when he saw about twenty yards before him another travelling party, of which he begged his father to take a survey, saying, national prejudice apart, he no longer wondered at the men's mirth. The carriage they had in view was alone sufficient to excite the laughter of any Englishman; it was an immense old fashioned French cabriolet, or one horse chaise, and seemed as if it had been in constant use during the preceding winter, and that the dirt had been left upon it to preserve the wood, which was not visible in many places; nor was it possible to distinguish whether it ever had been painted, much less of what colour. This elegant, light machine, was drawn by a horse, that gave them some
idea

idea of the famous Rosinante, so celebrated in Michael Cervante's excellent novel. This poor animal was very lame of the near fore foot, and his knees were perfectly bare; but to the astonishment of both, tugging at this miserable beast's head, with the reins in his hands, and walking backwards up the hill, they discovered Bazile de Melac, adorned, as he thought, having discovered it was the fashion, in an English travelling dress; that is, a dark blue frock, and pink velvet collar, having preferred it to a scarlet; his new boots, and to complete the whole, a round hat, resembling a skimming dish.

The Duke St. Piene let down his blind the moment he caught sight of Bazile, and intreated his son to do the same, as he would not know whom the carriage belonged to, and the servants were not in sight. "Gracious heaven!" said the astonished father, "how came this mad brained youth here? He seems to have joined some party." They

had observed two other young men, who appeared also to have alighted from this elegant vehicle.—“What a conveyance!” the Duke exclaimed; “and where can he be going?” taking another peep. Bazile, little guessing who was so near him, was still endeavouring, by the clever manœuvre already mentioned, to assist the progress of the ill-fated beast of whom he seemed to have the direction. The mirth, nay even shouts of laughter, of the English servants had put him into a violent rage; his teeth were clenched, and every feature seemed convulsed with passion.

On the off side was another young man, applying a long thonged whip with all his might to the poor beast’s sides, legs, or in short any part he could reach, whom the Duke never recollected to have seen before; but in the third, who was also labouring very hard, shoving behind, to assist as far as laid in his power, and who held a very large stone under his arm, instead of a *chapeau bras*, Adolphus recognized the face of one of
Bazile’s

Bazile's companions at l'Hotel de Flanders ; and the Duke de St. Piene, his wine-merchant's head clerk, in the person of Berenger, whom he did not know was among his son's acquaintance, much less supposed he was his bosom friend.

The Duke and Adolphus, having each taken a second survey of this curious groupe, burst out a laughing, and the remarks of the English servants, and their own postillions which were truly ludicrous, added to their mirth.

"I wonder when they will reach the summit of this hill," said Adolphus.

“ And I wonder where they are going, if they should be so fortunate as to succeed,” said the Duke:—“ this is not the road Bazile ought to have been upon ; nor is he in company he has any reason to suppose would meet my approbation ; but he thinks himself secure, has got plenty of money in his pocket, and has, no doubt, some very

wife scheme in his head to keep me in ignorance of having thus disobeyed my orders:—I own I shan't be sorry to discover what lengths he will dare go."

"I am afraid he will know the servants," said Adolphus; "they were proceeding gently, but still at a great distance; as the one who rode courier had made a considerable advance on the carriage, having left Flixcourt near half an hour before they started."

"We must prevent that if possible," said the Duke; "for I would not have Bazile know I am so near him for the universe; and he might be tempted to speak to your men, and thus discover the * *pot aux roses*."

They were now within a very few paces of the cabriolet: the English servants were riding on each side, and promising, in very intelligible French, to order their supper at Piquigny, the next post town, within six miles

* Secret—a French expression.

miles of Flixcourt ; and when the miserable beast did make shift to crawl on a few steps, the Duke's postillion's observation of—" *Bien, cela est bon : ne craignez rien, Messieurs, une fois sur la montagne, vous nous passerez tous,*" added to Bazile's and his companion's rage, and the Englishmen's diversion ; who were calculating when they would reach the top of the hill at the rate they moved ; and seriously advising them to take their horse out and draw their machine themselves, if they were in a hurry, for he only impeded their progress : then enquiring where they should order their dinner to be sent ; or whether they were provided in that respect ; hoping they would not meet many dogs ; and adding, it was fortunate their master's were in the chaise with him, or they would infallibly have seized their animal, had they found themselves sharp set : they had seen many a better in a thieving dustman's cart near London !

Bazile, to whom the chief of their discourse was addressed, became furious by these repeated insults; and while he strained every nerve to endeavour to get out of their way, he exclaimed, in a voice almost choaked with passion, "*Passsez, votre chemin, bêtes,*" while the Englishmen could hardly set their horses for laughing.

In a few minutes the Duke's carriage past this elegant machine; but as both father and son were anxious to see as much as they could of Bazile's behaviour upon this trying occasion, they took it in turn to look out of the coach glass, and communicate their remarks to each other.

They were hardly past, when one of the Englishmen said he really began to pity them; therefore would do all in his power to assist them, beginning to whip on the near side, which the horse leant towards, and his strokes had so good an effect, they said he had advanced at least two yards and a half: repeating
ing

ing his attempt, but not with equal success, the obstinate horse turned restive, and ran backwards instead of forwards; they were, however, provided against this misfortune, which had befallen them once before, by Berenger's instantly placing the large stone, already mentioned, against one of the wheels.

“What an excellent precaution,” the footmen observed, calling out to each other, agreeing to put them in motion once more, if possible: again beginning to whip the beast, who could not follow the bent of his inclinations by running backwards, nor chusing to advance, he now made an effort to kick up behind, to the increasing diversion of Bazile's and his friends' tormentors; but the three gentlemen were so seriously angry, they began to threaten the servants with the various punishments they assured them they would inflict; and Bazile, more courageous than his companions, stopped to pick up a stone to level at them: his broad-brimmed, shallow-crowned hat fell, in mak-

ing the attempt : Bazile flung a handful of dust at them, while the one who held the whip advanced in a menacing attitude, saying he would break every bone in the Englishmens' skin, if they dared to molest them any more. Not at all intimidated by this serious threat, the fellows, three stout athletic young men, persisted in doing their endeavours to help them up the hill ; till the unfortunate travellers, enraged beyond endurance, flew upon them. Bazile and Berenger, armed with two long canes they had taken out of the carriage, and the third with his whip, a sort of battle royal ensued ; the men retaliated with their post whips, but, as the Englishmen observed, the post horses refused to stand fire, two of them dismounted and gave their horses to the third ; the first caught Bazile by the collar, tripped up his heels, and flung him into a ditch by the road side, which happened to be dry, but very dirty ; therefore, when he rose, he seemed perfectly satisfied with the specimen he had received of English politeness :—of Berenger

ger they made a sort of rolling pin, and tumbling him over and over for several yards down the hill; while the third, taking warning from the rough treatment his companions experienced, retreated behind their vehicle. The servants finding themselves masters of the field, again mounted their horses, and rode off full speed, triumphing in having thus humbled this French party: the Duke de St. Piene, who saw Bazile had received no hurt, was very much diverted with the whole scene.

Adolphus wished very much to have interfered in his behalf, but his father represented what must be the consequence of his kindness, so forcibly, that he gave up the idea. His servants, seeing what was going forward, had began to quicken their pace up the hill. Adolphus therefore looked out at the left hand window, and making them a sign they understood to avoid the fray, they obeyed, by taking a circuit in an adjoining field, which was not inclosed; this prevented Bazile

zile from forming any conjectures respecting who was in the carriage ; and the Duke ordered the post-boys to make the best of their way, as the three friends seemed to be debating whether they should not prefer their complaints, and implore their assistance ; but, before they lost sight of them, they seemed to have turned their horse round, in hopes, the Duke supposed, he would be more inclined to go downwards than upwards.

“ I cannot say I approve of the behaviour of the English servants,” said he, “ though I am very happy Bazile has been so completely mortified :—I rather hope this adventure will put a stop to his rambles : if he now pursues his journey to Havre, I shall think him sufficiently punished for his folly.” This rencounter and the subsequent skirmish afforded Adolphus and his father ample subject for conversation till they reached Amiens. The English carriage had changed horses when they did at Piquigny ; and owing to Adolphus’s courier having had such an advance

vance upon their's, the Duke now took the lead, according to the established rules ; as it was contrary to *l'Ordonnance du Roi* for postillions to pass each other upon the road, and they took the *pas* upon each other according to the arrival of carriages or couriers at the different post-houses.

The Duke and his son drove to the first inn, *l'Hotel de la diligence* : there were three rooms upon the ground floor, to the left hand of a large gateway that opened into the yard ; and they crossed the middle one to get to the farthest : this was the best room ; an elegant saloon, a very uncommon thing, as has been before observed, in a French inn. The English party drove into the yard just after, and were conducted into the room that looked into the street. As their courier had continued to precede them, and had received their orders, they found their breakfast ready : during their repast the Duke remarked Adolphus looked very pale, which he assured him ought merely to be

be attributed to the heat of the weather; but his Grace, who felt more anxiety for his eldest than for his youngest son, began to be seriously alarmed; and as soon as they had finished their meal, intreated him not to think of going further till the afternoon, and begged he would lie down for an hour or two;—to oblige his father, Adolphus consented; and wishing to raise his mother higher if possible in the Duke's estimation than before they met, when he retired to the room which had been prepared for him, accompanied by his father, he took a packet containing all the letters he had received from the Duchess, during his stay at Dunkirk, from his dressing box, and putting them into his father's hands, said, "Those will very probably afford you some amusement, my dear Sir." The Duke, who still bore the name of de Melac before his son's servants, did not chuse to express the gratitude he felt for this kind proof of his confidence; therefore merely bowed as he took the proffered packet, wishing him a good repose, adding

adding with a smile, "and pleasant dreams if you should forget yourself," returned into the saloon where they had breakfasted, just in time to see the English party drive off.

As the fun was now full upon the room, the waiters had drawn all the curtains, and opened the windows to give a free circulation of air: the door between the two rooms was also a-jar: a curtain which fell over it concealed this from the Duke, who seating himself in the most retired and coolest place, began to peruse the effusions of maternal tenderness, (for such the Duchess's letters to her son might truly be styled,) and very happy to discover he seemed to have acquired his son's esteem under the name of de Melac: from her Grace's comments upon his new friend, he was thus agreeably employed, and had been so for near an hour, when he heard a bustle in the court-yard, and soon found it proceeded from more company, who were shewn into the adjoining apartment; but what was his surprize to
recognize

recognize in the first voice he heard, that it was his old friend Vanval, who asked the waiter if the next room was not cooler than the one he was in.—“Not at all, Sir,” said the waiter; “besides, it is engaged, and this is the room we always keep for the diligence company.”

The Duke easily guessed Vanval was upon the road to Paris with his nephew Julien: he had not seen him for two days preceding his own departure; and as he did not wish any of his Dunkirk friends to know even of his intended journey, had not mentioned it to the surgeon, notwithstanding he had told him of his intentions to set off for Paris towards the latter end of the week: Madame de Franval had orders to tell every one who enquired for him, he was gone a little way into the country upon business, and was expected home daily; and such was the account Vanval had received when he went to take leave previous to his departure.

Wishing

Wishing to see his worthy friend, for whom he entertained the greatest esteem, the Duke was going to ring the bell, a luxury as rarely to be met with at a French inn as a saloon, but was stopped by Vanval's saying, in a gay tone, "Come, come, Mr. Bazile, never mind; you must purchase another *frock à L'Angloise* at Paris, that is all."

"I should not have minded spoiling a dozen suits of cloaths, friend Vanval," said Bazile, ever inclined to be impertinent to those he deemed his inferiors, when he supposed himself out of his father's hearing, "if I could but have been revenged upon the authors of my misfortune."

"You should have seized the moment when it was in your power," said Vanval; "but I am amazed a young man of your spirit did not prefer the diligence to such a paltry conveyance."

"Paltry," said Berenger; "sure a gentleman's own carriage is at any time preferable to a stage coach, where he may, to be sure,

sure, as is our case, meet with very good company, but where he is full as likely to meet with bad. We travelled as men of fashion ought to do, who wish to see the country they pass through; and got on as well as we could wish, before we met those cursed servants—What would have been more convenient than a cabriolet at Paris, at this time of year? We could have visited all the environs at a very trifling expence;—all the first nobility drive them, I have been assured from those I can rely upon; nay, you must have seen many of the superior officers use them at Dunkirk.”

“But those I have remarked did not bear much resemblance to your’s, whose only merit certainly consisted in the quantity of wood and iron which had been made use of in its construction.—Why Julien,” turning to his nephew, “where have you been all this time?”

Talking to the Duke de Civrac’s valet—
“Sir, I am afraid, from what the man said,
his

his master is not so well recovered from his late accident as all his friends could wish : his Grace is now in bed, he tells me, but means to pursue his journey in the evening."

The Duke de St. Piene, fearful René had mentioned his master's having a companion with him to Julien, approached one of the windows and beckoned to the man, who was seated upon a bench. René assured him, he had merely answered the questions the young man had asked concerning the Duke's health ; and should certainly not have taken the liberty to mention either his being with his master or his name, ignorant as he was whether such a measure might meet their approbation.

Good masters, thought the Duke, make good servants, is an old but true adage ; he therefore commended René's prudence, and intreated he would caution the waiters, in case they were questioned, not to say the
Duke

Duke had any person with him: he had lost some part of the discourse in the other room, during this conference with the Valet, but upon returning to his station near the door, heard the surgeon say, "Well, I can't see what objections you can have, Mr. Bazile, to the Duke de Civrac's knowing you are here—were I in your place I should send my compliments to his Grace, and as he is alone, I presume you might stand a chance of reaching Paris in rather a genteeler style than you left St. Omers."

"Why, I flatter myself, Vanval, were his Grace to know how I was situated, he would make me an offer of a seat in his carriage, but I should not chuse to leave my companions."

"That is very polite," said the surgeon; "but pray, Mr. waiter, did an English party upon their road to Paris stop at your house this morning? The people at Flixcourt said they understood they meant to breakfast at Amiens."

"Yes,

"Yes, Sir," was the answer.

"They were attended by a dozen servants or more, I have been told," said the surgeon.

"I only saw three, Sir," said the waiter.

"Ha! why how is this, Mr. Bazile? the number of your adversaries seems strangely reduced."

"There were eight or ten at least, Sir," said Bazile, in a peremptory tone; "but some of them were afraid to come up, seeing how roughly we handled their fellows, as we turned them out of the road."

"An odd kind of a story," said Vanval: "pray friend, (turning to the waiter) were those three servants you saw very much bruised, or did any of them seem to have lost the use of their limbs?"

"They made no complaints, Sir; indeed they came in, and went fr m here, laughing, and set all our stable-men and the Duke de Civrac's servants into a roar of mirth, from the description they gave of a scuffle they had had with three gentlemen upon Flixcourt hill."

"Then

“ Then I cannot suppose any of their fellows were left behind unable to proceed,” said the surgeon ; “ though really from your account, Mr. Bazile, I was in hopes I should have fallen into a job which would have defrayed my journey to Paris ; for the English are usually very generous, though in the present case my young friend, had mine, or the assistance of any other surgeon been required, I have my doubts whether you and your companions would not have been saddled with the expences. And I am of opinion this saving plan of your’s, in respect to your carriage, when you all three come to balance your accounts, will not turn out quite so oeconomic as you expected.—What did you say the horse cost you, Berenger?—you were the purchaser, I think.”

“ He was remarkably cheap, Sir,” said the clerk, pettishly ; “ I only gave a * hundred and fifty livres for him.”

“ Oh, you had him a great bargain, no doubt,” said Vanval ; “ the carriage you hired

* Six guineas.

hired for the journey. Now, let me see, this famous horse dragged you three and your baggage from St. Omer's to Flixcourt, a distance you would have rode in the diligence* for a third of what this fine animal cost you. You have already paid thirty livres you say for the hire of your machine, and will now be obliged to pay the seven louis the owner valued it at; yet the post-master at Flixcourt only gave you eighty livres for both horse and chaise, and told you, before us all, if you would throw him three livres back again, he would pistol your horse before your face, and knock your old rumble to pieces; because he hopes to make his money of the wood and iron, for no decent people would travel in it, in its present state."

This statement highly amused Julien and two nuns belonging to the abbey of Blan-

* French diligences never carry less than eight and often twelve passengers.

decque, near St. Omers, who are allowed, as it is not a cloistered convent, to visit their friends once a year, and were now upon their way to Paris for that purpose.

“ I am only afraid,” the surgeon continued, “ the Duke de Civrac did not see you in all your glory, Mr. Bazile ; I am sure he would have been highly flattered at your attempt, for I can’t say it is much more, to imitate his travelling dress. However, I will see him, if his Grace is stirring, before we are summoned to proceed.”

“ If you should, my dear Vanval, don’t mention me ; I would not have him know I am going to Paris, and in a diligence, for the universe.”

“ I believe you, Mr. Bazile,” said Vanval, who had guest, from the moment he had joined their party, he had taken this jaunt unknown to his father, and seemed therefore to enjoy teasing him on the accidents and mortifications he had already met with.

And

And the Duke was highly pleased with the severe strokes the old surgeon gave him ; —he now found he was actually going on to Paris, in company with two low young men, likely to lead him into all acts of mischief, and began seriously to reflect what course he ought to pursue.

CHAP. VI.

IT may now be necessary to account for Bazile's unexpected appearance upon Flix-court-hill.

As soon as Berenger was informed of his intended journey to Havre, he determined to use his utmost eloquence to induce him to seize so favourable an opportunity to take a short trip to Paris; having long ardently wished to visit the capital, knowing how much it would add to his consequence upon his return, to be able to say "I saw such a thing at Paris—and the king was dressed in such

such a manner—and the queen looked at me; and——”

During their fresh water voyage, he ventured to propose their proceeding immediately post to Paris, where they might spend a few days, and could then return together to Abbeville, from whence Bazile might proceed to Havre, and he return to Dunkirk.

Bazile was enchanted with the scheme, and readily gave into it. Berenger had got leave of absence for a fortnight, having told his master he wished to go and see his friends at Noyon in Picardie, in hopes of bringing Bazile to his way of thinking.

When they arrived at St. Omers, each went to do their business; and Berenger, who was particularly intimate with one of the clerks in the merchant's counting-house with whom he was come to transact business, in the fullness of his joy mentioned to

him his intended jaunt. Duvemay, the name of the clerk, declared nothing could have been more fortunate, as he was upon the eve of his departure for Paris himself, and would, if they approved of it, join their party, pointing out the cheap method of travelling they should adopt.

Bazile was consulted, and, though he certainly had infinitely more pride, and rather more taste, than his companions, submitted to their directions, upon reflecting by this means he should have more money to spend when he reached Paris, and certain of disposing of his horse for as much, if not more, than he had cost him, when he had done his duty; for it may be supposed he was paymaster-general upon the occasion.

It is already known what misfortunes attended this well-laid plan; and when they found it impossible to climb the ascent where they were overtaken by the Duke and Adolphus, they prudently turned their horse round,

round, and with some difficulty got him into the yard of the post-house at Flixcourt, and there they disposed of him and their chaise, as has been already mentioned, and waited the arrival of the diligence, in which they now intended to pursue their journey. Bazile did not entertain the slightest fear of this stolen march coming to his father's ears, as he had merely desired him to write to him soon after he reached Havre; it was only writing the moment he reached there, which would effectually conceal the tour he had thought proper to make.

When the diligence stopped to change horses at Flixcourt, they enquired if they could be admitted into the vehicle? and were answered in the affirmative. But when Bazile saw Vanval and his nephew, he began to tremble for his secret; however, soon determined to assure the former he was going upon some private business for his father to Paris, for which reason his journey had been kept so secret; nay it was even to be given

15

out,

out, he was gone somewhere else, thinking thus effectually to silence the good-natured Flamand, who was not, as he hoped, the dupe of this well-concerted story, and who soon determined to write an account of this rencounter to the Receiver General.

The Duke de St. Piene having also come to a resolution how to act, rung his bell; the waiter came through the room in which the diligence party were assembled. Bazile, terrified lest he should be seen by the Duke de Civrac, got away from the door, beckoned the waiter to him, and enquired who was in the next room? "the Duke de Civrac, Sir;"—"then pray, my dear friend, don't mention my name to his Grace."

Without reflecting, such was the terror of Adolphus, the waiter did not know him; nor was there the slightest chance of the Duke's making any enquiries concerning travellers belonging to the diligence. He further intreated the waiter would shut the door

door after him, which he now perceived was open, giving him a thirty sous piece to induce him to oblige him. The waiter did as he desired, highly amused, as well as Vanval, by the terror he displayed.

His Grace meant to have given a similar order; and was not a little pleased to find Bazile was, at least, conscious of his faults, and very much in awe of his brother, whose excellent example he hoped would work some alteration in his conduct. He had retired to the farther end of his room not to be overheard, and desired the waiter to give the Duke de Civrac's compliments to the elderly gentleman in the next room, and he should be glad to see him for a few minutes, adding, you will bring him round by the other door, putting a six-livre piece into his hand to assist his memory and make him punctual; and in a few seconds the Duke heard his message delivered.

Vanval's eyes sparkled with delight, while Bazile and Berenger again flew to the corner of the room, the most out of sight of the door. The waiter, in hopes of another present, made Bazile a sign to give him to understand it was merely to oblige him; while he said to the surgeon, "This way, Sir;—I believe his Grace is returned up stairs."

Bazile ran after Vanval, as he left the room, and with the most rueful countenance, and in the most earnest manner, intreated he would not mention his being in the hotel to the Duke.

"My discretion is almost become a proverb, you know, my young friend," with a droll look expressive of his meaning; "you may have your own private reasons for not wishing to be noticed by so great and so good a man; but for my own part I shall always feel proud to be thus distinguished."

The

The Duke met Vanval at the other door, and stopped his exclamations of surprize by putting his finger upon his lips; and the Duke told him, in a whisper, to address him as his Grace, and as he would have done the Duke de Civrac, to put Bazile off his guard, who was, no doubt, listening. Vanval enjoyed the joke, and exhausted all his stock of compliments to his old friend. "Who then," drawing him to the further end of the room, "said (like my son) I am upon a private expedition to Paris?"

"My good friend, he as little supposes we are such near neighbours, as I did not think I should have overtaken him where I did this morning, and in such company: he has already, I know; nay have seen, been punished for his imprudence, but seems determined to persevere in his wild career, and own I am curious to know what lengths he will go: you would therefore do me a particular favour, my dear friend, if you would enquire or try to discover where he takes up his abode at Paris; and do me the favour to bring me

the information to the Hotel de St. Firmin, in the Rue de Richelieu, where I promise you a hearty welcome in the name of its amiable owner, the Duke de Civrac, with whom I shall reside; but I won't detain you now from your dinner—where do you sleep?"

"At St. Juste," said the surgeon.

"Then should a favourable opportunity offer, I will see you again this evening; indeed I wish you to see my—(son was coming out, but the Duke caught the words, and substituted friend) the Duke de Civrac; he is far from well, and Bertrand seems to fear he met with some inward bruise, which may be attended with dangerous consequences."

Vanval rather raised his spirits upon that score, telling him gentle exercise was more likely to be of service in that case than any thing else; and assuring him there was little to fear, admitting he had received any inward injury, for a man of the Duke's constitution,

stitution, who had always apparently led so regular a life: they then parted, mutually pleased with each other; the Duke to think his darling Adolphus was in no danger, and that, through Vanval's means, he should be able to place a spy upon the wild, ungovernable Bazile; while Vanval was highly pleased to find himself thus become the confident of the Receiver-General, and whom he had always found to be a noble-spirited, generous man, and to think he now had it in his power to torment Bazile, whose conduct he thought deserving the severest censure, with impunity. The latter met him at the door when he returned, and hoped he had kept his word.

"You put me in mind of *la Fontaine's* fly, Mr. Bazile," said Vanval, who, placed upon the back of a stage coach horse ascending a steep hill, exclaimed—"How WE work!—for you suppose yourself of much more consequence than you really are. His Grace never mentioned your name."

"Yet

"Yet intimate as he is with Mr. de Melac, I should suppose he knows you are upon the road to Paris, notwithstanding the privacy of your errand."

Bazile did not take this hint: "After the first compliments, you spoke very low, Vanval—pray why did you take that precaution?"

"Not for fear of listeners, Mr. Bazile; for neither his Grace nor I entertained so mean an opinion of any of this company." Bazile coloured, and Julien smiled, while Vanval thus continued—"His Grace is not so well as I hoped to have found him, and has been advised not to raise his voice till he is more recovered from the effects of his fall; however, he has done me the honour to invite me to visit the Hotel de St. Firmin."

"Oh, now you are joking," said Bazile, very much picqued; "though his Grace is certainly very free for a man of his rank."

"I am therefore astonished you should be
so

so much afraid of him : Did Mr. de Melac desire you to avoid his Grace, if accident threw you in his way ?”

Bazile affected not to understand these broad hints, and was not sorry when they were summoned to proceed on their journey, and preferred a silent prayer that illness might prevent the Duke from overtaking the diligence any more before they reached Paris.

He had not been gone a quarter of an hour, when Adolphus came down, who had not been asleep, but had wished to allow his father full time to peruse the letters he had put into his hands : not chusing, for obvious reasons, to enquire how he had been amused, he said he felt himself quite refreshed, and was really very hungry.

“Such excellent news has given me an appetite, my dear Adolphus ; I dare say our dinner is ready—we will make enquiry”—it was very soon brought in, and, during that interval,

interval, the Duke told his son, he had not half finished the interesting letters he had given him to peruse; he must therefore entreat his permission to keep them a little longer, (mentioning what had interrupted his reading). Adolphus was highly amused, and protested he would feign some very serious cause to consult Vanval in the evening.

“ I am truly happy,” said the Duke, “ he thus opportunely met with that mad-brained, or more properly, weak youth; for he allows every designing low knave to make him his dupe, and be diverted at his expence; he has not even spirit enough to be a rake.”

The entrance of the waiters with their dinner, put a stop to the conversation; but as soon as they were once more alone, the Duke said—“ How, what would you advise me to do with Bazile, my dear Adolphus? I can no longer think of making a financier of him; and the want of courage, and knack
of

of boasting, he has betrayed to-day, must convince you he would not make a very good figure at the head of a regiment, when called upon to exert his valour; for I am certain he would be the first to run away."

"That is drawing rather an unfair conclusion, from what passed in our fight this morning, my dear sir: I have known instances, and have often heard it remarked by many brave men, that those they have thought the most deficient in point of courage, have sometimes, when put to the test, deceived their expectations: and many people, you know, assert courage to be hereditary; in that case, I will be answerable, Bazile will never be deemed a coward; but even the bravest man is not always equally disposed to fight, though honour and a thirst for glory often leads them on to victory."

"I agree with your observations in many respects, and cannot say I think myself deficient in courage; but if we are to believe our valour is transmitted to our posterity with our titles, too superabundant share of mine
has

has devolved to my eldest son, to allow me to hope such a remark stands good with respect to my youngest;—besides, you, my Adolphus, are descended from a race of heroes on your mother's side. Your grandfather, the Marechal de St. Firmin, under whom you studied the art of war, particularly distinguished himself at the battle of Fontenoy. Few men were more truly deserving the high military rank he bore. A German in point of discipline, yet beloved, nay adored by every man under his command; but you tread so exactly in his steps, that these remarks are very superfluous. Your mother has also proved herself a heroine!—but she is every way superior to the rest of her sex. I have often, in former times, been amazed at the strict friendship subsisting between her and Madame de Neufpont; for never were two dispositions less alike: I really don't think the latter ever was serious five minutes together, though she certainly possesses a most excellent heart, but gay to an excess:—she can laugh even at the most serious

rious

rious incidents in human life. But to return to the subject of our argument, Madame de Melac (the name she bore in her first husband's life-time, and which I assumed at her request) was, as I have already told you, an excellent woman in her way ; rather lovely than otherwise, and possessed many estimable qualities, which have, I hope, fallen to the share of her daughters.

Bazile merely seems to have inherited (what in her was very excusable) her pusillanimity ; for she was timorous to an excess ; yet I really begin to hope your example, my Adolphus, may bring about a reformation in his manners and sentiments. With the assistance of my worthy friend Vanval, I shall be able to learn how he spends his time at Paris ; his present companions can only lead him into low society ; but I have this consolation, his dread of my anger will increase with his knowledge of my rank and fortune ; and as his own consequence wholly depends upon me,

me, he will certainly endeavour to court my favour: bad habits are often eradicated by attempting to assume the semblance of good ones. Adolphus strengthened his father in these cheering ideas, and determined to do all in his power to make Bazile every thing he could wish, and deserving the love and esteem of such a parent.

Bazile merely seems to have inherited (what in fact was very exorable) his father's anxiety; for he was inclined to an excess of it. I really begin to hope, by way of example, my Adolphus may bring about a reformation in his manner and behaviour. With the assurance of my worthy friend Vivaldi, I shall be able to learn how he spends his time at Paris; the present comparisons can only lead him to a false glory; but I have the consolation, in the midst of my regret with respect to his idleness, of my task and fortune, and as to my own education, wholly dependent upon

CHAP-

CHAP. XII.

AT four o'clock the Duke and Adolphus left Amiens, desirous to reach St. Juste before the diligence, which, though it had such an advance upon them, and also went post, only jogged along at the rate of three miles an hour; they passed it while it was changing horses at Breteuil.

Bazile and Berenger were as anxious to conceal themselves from the Duke de Civrac, as the Duke de St. Piene was to escape their observation; of course nothing passed, but a profound bow Vanval addressed to Adolphus, who returned the compliment, and determined, with his father's consent, to ask the honest Flamand to sup with them.

They

They reached St. Juste before dusk, and were shewn, according to the usual custom, into a large two-bedded room at the end of an old fashioned gallery, with which all the other apartments communicated.

Soon after they had passed the diligence, the Duke de St. Piene recollected he had not left any orders with his head clerk concerning a vessel daily expected at Dunkirk, from Gaudaloupe, in which there was some considerable property belonging to one of his friends, consigned to his care; he therefore determined to write a few lines to Madame de Franval, and send his letter express that evening, for fear any disagreeable circumstances might arise from his neglect. He accordingly sat down to write the moment they arrived; and Adolphus stepped into the garden he saw facing the windows by way of stretching his legs; but his real inducement to take this walk was the wish he entertained of seeing and speaking to Bazile, meaning to point out in the most gentle

gentle manner, the impropriety of his present scheme. If he acknowledged (and he meant to put the question pretty home to him) he was going to Paris unknown to his father, he then intended to make use of the most persuasive terms to take a polite leave of his companions, and set out upon his return to Havre. He particularly wished every anxiety for this silly youth should be banished from his father's mind before the meeting with his mother; and knew, could he be once certain he was upon the road to Havre, without the attending Parasites, who would flatter even his vices, the Duke would be perfectly easy. To accelerate by every means in his power so desirable an event, he paced the garden for some time, revolving in his mind what he should say to Bazile; but upon hearing a carriage advance, came towards the gate; after deciding to seize the opportunity of his alighting, that he might not lose sight of him; when a servant in the Marquis de Neufpont's livery came galloping into the inn yard, and jumped off his horse.

horse. Adolphus made a sudden stop, hardly crediting the evidences of his eyes, and advanced a few steps to take a nearer survey of the man, whose face he instantly recollected, he made another stop, lost in wonder. This servant was riding post; he must call to know where he was going, but had not spoke, when a travelling post coach and six, he knew belonged to the same nobleman, followed full speed into the yard, attended by several more servants, among whom he recognized two belonging to his mother; for, notwithstanding her residence in the abbey St. Antoine, she had still several male domestics in her suite, who lodged in the inward courts of the convent. A thousand confused ideas rushed into his mind; but the reflection that the Duchess was certainly in the carriage, roused him, and he advanced mechanically towards it, thinking where she could be going; some officious person had certainly informed her of his late accident, and she was upon the road to Dunkirk; then, as he had written to inform

her

her he was upon the point of leaving that town, and was coming upon business to Paris; she could not suppose him in any danger. It instantly struck him Agnes de Moncove was of the party; they were on the road to meet him by way of making him amends for his disappointment at Ypres; in that case his mother was prepared to see him; he therefore hastened forward, and reached the coach door at the moment Madame de St. Piene had got her foot upon the step. The servants, who first caught sight of him, made way with some marks of surprise, which induced him to suppose they did not expect to see him; and his mother raising her eyes at that moment, amazed at the man's sudden retreat, exclaimed, gracious heaven, here is my son! and was down the steps and in his arms in a moment. Every other sentiment now gave way to filial tenderness in the bosom of Adolphus; while his amiable mother, breathless between joy and surprise, said, "how little did I expect to meet you here, my Adolphus. As she

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looked in very good health, and seemed in excellent spirits, the Duke was convinced she was still unacquainted with his accident, and that he had been equally mistaken in the other conjecture he had formed; and, before he could ask an explanation, Madame de Neufpont, who had alighted during this interval, exclaimed, "Well, preserve me from such old-fashioned sons, who pay more attention to their mother than to young beautiful women who have undertaken a long journey in quest of them."

This raillery made Adolphus look round towards the coach, for the idea of Palmira once more came across him: he was rather agreeably surprised when he only saw two waiting-woman.

"Who did you expect to see, you provoking wretch," said Madame de Neufpont; "I find you are bent upon affronting me, though I was assured the other day I looked more lovely than I did at sixteen."

"And

"And I am convinced your admirers have increased with your years," said Adolphus, "for you are still the admiration of the present, and are becoming that of the rising generation."

"There's for you Minette, (the name Madame de Neufpont usually gave the Duchesse); but you are really a strange queer mortal (perceiving tears of joy trickling down her cheeks); you can bear sorrow with the most heroic fortitude, but joy is sure to overpower you. But come, let's go into the house, and call this rogue to an account for appearing here thus unexpectedly, on purpose, I do believe, to overturn our fine concerted plan, notwithstanding our great secrecy; for you must know, de Civrac, we meant to have surprised you by our sudden appearance at Dunkirk; but you have turned the tables upon us: however, I prognosticate you will be a very great General in time; I really think you keep spies upon our conduct, else how came you here so very apropos?"

“When you chuse to allow me time, Marchioness,” said Adolphus, “I will endeavour to exculpate myself to your satisfaction; believe me I am particularly happy to see you look so well and in such excellent spirits.”

“Yet I never had greater reason to be sorrowful,” said the Marchioness; “but I can’t assume a serious air; my troubles all sink deep into my heart, and there they remain so well concealed no one is ever tempted to pity me: give me a true tragedy heroine, who can weep and wail and stalk about with her white handkerchief in her hand, pouring out her lamentations to the very winds, such are sure to meet with commiseration.”

Adolphus looked rather surprised, and turned to his mother, who was wiping the pearly drops from her cheeks, but now said, with a smile, “don’t look serious, my dear Adolphus, you know our gay friend is fond of dealing in ambiguities sometimes; but I protest

protest this truly agreeable surprize has almost proved too much for me."

"Indeed you are very right," said the gay Marchioness; "now I never lose the use of my tongue; more's the pity, some impertinent people would be apt to say: the present company is always excepted upon these occasions, Adolphus; but you, Minette, ever cry when you ought to laugh; *vice versa*, I always laugh when I have reason to cry; pray which is the most of a philosopher, Adolphus?"

"As it may take him some time to decide," said the Duchess, "with your leave, we will postpone the argument till we have ascended these excellent stairs."

A loquacious fille d'Auberge preceded them into a room next the one occupied by Adolphus and his father, who, amidst the different sensations his mother's arrival had occasioned, had almost forgot his fellow traveller; but as they approached his door, he made a sort of involuntary step, and unthink-

ingly said good heavens! then as suddenly checking himself, he rushed forward, meaning to put himself between his mother and the window at which the Duke sat writing; when he perceived the girl had opened the door of an adjoining room before they came to theirs, saying, as they entered, "this is the best room we have unoccupied, Ladies. Monseignior (looking at the Duke, who had advanced towards the windows, and was trying to arrange his ideas) has got a much better, and I dare say he and the other gentleman will change with you ladies, as you are all friends." "Very well, ma fille," said the Marchioness, "if we like the other room best, we shan't make any scruple of turning Messieurs out; in the mean while go and assist our woman to bring up the baggage, and send me a glass of water, for I want something to cheer my spirits, throwing herself into a chair as she concluded speaking. The Duchess had remarked, with no small degree of surprise, her son's thoughtless exclamation,

clamation and subsequent behaviour, and perceived he seemed buried in a reverie, and to have totally forgot any one was present : anxious, as may be supposed, she said, "pray what occasioned your sudden stop in the passage, Adolphus ; what made you in such haste to precede us into the room." Roused by these questions, the Duke turned round, and with some degree of hesitation said ; " Upon my word, my dear madam, I was not conscious of my rudeness ; my late surprise is all I can plead in extenuation of my fault." Advancing towards the door, while the Duchess affected to laugh at his gravity, convinced the absence of mind he had betrayed was not occasioned by her arrival, Adolphus, fearful his father should come into the passage, put to the door, while the gay Marchioness, having equally remarked his reverie, said " I protest you don't seem to know what you are about de Civrac." Adolphus attempted to laugh off the remark, though he could not help privately acknowledging its justice.

"You are too much of a novice in the art of dissimulation, Duke, to blind so sagacious an observer as myself," said the Marchioness; "you may be an adept in *ruse de guerres*, but don't seem likely to shine in *ruses d'amour*; for I am well convinced your travelling companion does not come under the denomination of a gentleman; some smart little Flamand most likely. So to be honest at once, and save me a world of useless conjectures——"

At that moment Madame de St. Piene exclaimed, "for heaven's sake, Adolphus, what is the matter?"

Very unthinkingly, while listening to Madame de Neufpont, though he had paid very little attention to what she said, he had taken off his hat, which he had hitherto wore to conceal what his mother now caught sight of, the black riband bound round his head; he was absorbed in thought, reflecting in what manner to bring about the meeting
between

between his parents, wondering whether they would recollect each other, that he hardly attended to his mother's question, till she advanced towards him; "what has happened? and why do you wear that ribband?" Angry with himself, for being so inattentive, he said, "I really did not understand you at first, my dear ma'am; the warm weather made my hussar cap chafe my temples, and it is troublesome when I wear my hat without that ribband." At any other time this explanation would perfectly have satisfied the Duchess, but she saw his mind was pre-occupied, and could not help fancying something preyed upon his spirits; he looked as if he had been ill; that idea was alone sufficient to alarm her;—his natural gaiety seemed totally to have forsaken him, and Madame de Neufpont's raillery remained unanswered; yet her conjectures concerning his companion were certainly erroneous. Not chusing to seem curious in that respect, she only made very particular enquiries concerning his health; and received

very satisfactory answers, and every assurance most likely to calm her fears. Madame de Neufpont thought he had been ill, though she affected not to perceive any alteration in his countenance since they last parted, ribband excepted, which she said was a great addition to his physiognomy ; she had therefore taken it for granted he wore it as an ornament : however, ill or well, he must return with them to Dunkirk ; and travelling would be of infinite service to them all ; for her own part she had laboured under a very great oppression of spirits for the last week.

Adolphus was too much occupied in arranging his own plan to ask any explanation of this last phrase, or even to enquire what had occasioned their meeting ; only said he was willing to accompany them wherever they chose, and hoped the dissipation the variety of objects would afford, would induce Madame de Neufpont to re-assume her usual vivacity.

“ Unsocial

"Unsocial wretch!" said the Marchioness; "your *sang froid*, when hinting at my folly, is inimitable!—How like your father, she would have said;—mercy upon me—your provoking raillery, man, has disordered my weak brain, but remember you have not cleared yourself yet from the grave accusations I have laid to your charge; so pray, first of all, tell us how you came here, and where you were going; for you shall now travel our road, which may prove a very severe penance for your *pivadilloes*."

"I was going to Paris, my dear ma'am, upon business of importance, and am rather amazed to find my mother and you are so unacquainted with my intentions of leaving Dunkirk," mentioning the letter he had wrote to the Duchess on the day preceding his departure.

"I am the occasion of her not having received it," said the Marchioness, "for she left Paris three days ago merely to oblige me, and upon a most generous errand, wishing, if possible, to restore a silly romantic

young enthusiast to the use of her senses ; unfortunately she has compleatly failed in her undertaking ; for where no reason is given for acting absurdly, 'tis in vain to endeavour to confute folly by argument—'tis like fighting with the wind—so no wonder your mother's persuasive eloquence was of no avail."

" Yet who could be deaf to her mild, gentle accents ?" said Adolphus ; " but you really delight in riddles, Marchioness : am I to put my imagination to the rack, or do you intend to explain your meaning ?"

" I am very glad I have raised your curiosity," said the Marchioness ; " but remember I shall think you excessively silly, if what I have to communicate gives you a moment's uneasiness ; for you must know, Palmira, your betrothed bride has taken it into her head to frustrate all our kind intentions, by turning nun ; and yet does not chuse to give one plausible reason, in my opinion, for her folly and devotion, or more properly enthusiasm, which is all she pleads ;
and

and yet is so determined in her resolution, I am convinced she thinks she is acting a very meritorious part !”

Adolphus, really very much surpris'd, looked at his mother, who said—“ There is no accounting for the caprice of either young or old, my dear Adolphus ; and I can't place this sudden fervour (certainly the effect of mistaken zeal) to any other cause, since it renders my still favourite Palmira deaf to the voice of reason, and even supplications of her indulgent parents. This strange resolution certainly proceeds from some secret cause we are unable to fathom ; for it is as sudden as it is wonderful ; yet I can't pretend to doubt the sincerity of her vocation ; and if she is really actuated by any religious fears or scruples, she must, if they were not entirely removed, be miserable in the world : in a cloister, as I have repeatedly told her, a nun must be a saint, or the exact reverse of every thing that is good ; there is no middle path, and I make no doubt
she

she will prove an example to the house she has chosen for her retreat."

"I don't pretend to dive so far into the matter as you do, Minette," said the Marchioness: "the nuns have discovered the silly girl's weak side, and have seduced her imagination by exaggerated descriptions of the charms of a monastic life: were I certain she would never repent her precipitation, her folly would give me no concern; for that sort of devotion that forces a child to seclude herself from her parents and friends, does not appear to me to be very meritorious."

"Do not let us condemn whatever is founded upon virtue," said the Duchess; "even prejudice in that case ought to be respected, and religious scruples, if they can't be removed, should ever be held sacred."

"Thus are my ineffectual ravings ever silenced," said the Marchioness; but you, I hope, Adolphus, will acknowledge I have great reason to be low spirited."

"I must acknowledge Madame de Moncove has formed a very strange resolution,

Mar-

Marchioness; but presume you don't mean to permit her to take the veil till she is five and twenty; and between this and then a thousand unforeseen events may take place, to induce her to alter her resolution."

"Oh! the Marquis is so angry, he declares she may take the veil to-morrow, if she chuses; he only requested, as a particular favour, she would allow you to visit her, thinking (for your sex are all naturally vain) your persuasions would have induced her to draw comparisons not much in favour of a monastic life; but she positively refused to oblige him; he therefore protests she means to realize the romance of the spiritual Quixote, so thinks it high time she should bury herself and her absurdities in a nunnery; and I am determined to bear my misfortunes with patience, though I shall never forgive the old bigot who has helped to unsettle the deluded girl's mind; excuse me, for I am talking of your dear pious aunt, Madame la Marechal de l'Hotellain, who supports her by the most specious arguments

in

in her mad resolution, and who never scruples to wound the most generous minds, by reverting to past events, under the holy pretence of religion. Don't be angry, Minette, for I must speak my mind of this female *tartuffe*, a mere composition of pride, folly, ignorance, and superstition; and she has infected Palmira with her tainted breath, while she has poisoned her mind by arguments a child of two years old, in their right senses, might confute; however, finding it in vain to rescue the ill-fated girl from her clutches, we left Senlis, and were coming post haste to Dunkirk to impart our melancholy tale, and receive your consolations."

Adolphus stood listening, as she thought, to what Madame de Neuspont said; but his mind was so differently occupied, he scarcely understood a word, but still continued in the same apparently attentive posture after she had ceased speaking. She contemplated him in silence for a few seconds—then said—

"When

"When do you mean to favour us, Duke, with the subject of your profound meditations?"

"You won't allow me time to arrange my ideas, Marchioness," said the disconcerted Adolphus; "yet would have accused me of impoliteness, had I interrupted you; but really you seem in such spirits, I am half tempted to believe you are joking with me."

"Though I never was serious for half an hour together in my life, de Civrac, I am positively in earnest now; and shall be absolutely grave if you mean to compleat the tragedy by dying for love of a foolish girl you never saw."

"I should be very much astonished," said the Duchess, "if any body were inclined to pity or console the mother whatever might be their feelings with respect to the daughter; but your's is all forced gaiety, my lovely friend, merely assumed to conceal feelings which will do you the utmost honour—so let's change the subject."

Madame

Madame de Neufpont could not keep up the farce any longer. She was a true French woman in some respects, and possessed a flow of spirits which might lead undiscerning observers to fancy she was deficient in point of feeling: besides, she was very unwilling to allow; age crept on in spite of her vivacity; yet she possessed a most excellent heart, and would have sacrificed her life to serve her first and dearest friend, whose early misfortunes, borne with such heroic fortitude, yet meek humility, made her look up to her with the same awe and reverence she would have done her literary saint. Having taken a turn to the window to wipe away some tears she had not been able otherwise to disperse, and to drink a glass of water her woman had brought her, she returned again towards Adolphus, saying, "You have resided among those gross Flamands, Duke, till you have lost all your politeness—do you suppose neither your mother nor me required any refreshment after our dirty ride, not to mention our subsequent surprise and flurry?"

Adolphus,

Adolphus, perfectly conscious he deserved this reproof, tried to repair his want of attention; some wine was ordered, and he prevailed upon both ladies to drink a glass, to correct the water; but as the servants were now bringing in the baggage, and asking questions, Adolphus seized the opportunity to retire towards the window, and wrote with a pencil upon the cover of a letter the following words:

“My dear Madame de Neufpont, frame some excuse to request a few minutes private audience with your *devoted slave*, who has something of the utmost importance to communicate respecting your best friend.”

He soon caught the Marchioness's eyes, and slipped the paper into her hand, under pretence of calling for something out of the carriage. She immediately went into the gallery to read it; from the moment they had entered their apartment, she had suspected Adolphus had something upon his mind; his request, therefore, flattered her exceedingly,

exceedingly, and very anxious to learn this important secret, she returned into the room, resolving in her own mind some scheme to see the Duke alone: she sat down for a few seconds, gave a sigh, which Adolphus remarked, and advised her to drink another glass of wine. "You think, I presume, my brain is not sufficiently upon the whirl at present, Duke; but do give your arm, and let us go and take a turn in the garden you came out of: I have something for your private ear; excuse us for a short time, Minette; you can order supper the while."

"Mighty well," said the Duchess; "but if you exceed a quarter of an hour, I shall come in search of you." They were leaving the room when her Grace, who was particularly anxious to discover who was in the next apartment, said, "Where shall we sup?—your's is the best room, they say, Adolphus."

"I should long since have made an offer of it, my dear ma'am, if an officer, a friend
of

of mine (for I mean to convince you both it is not a lady) was not a little indisposed, and I did not wish to have him disturbed just now, but I hope he will be well enough to allow us to sup here."

"I beg the gentleman may not be deranged upon our account," said the Duchess, rather more satisfied; but Adolphus, fearful his father might have finished his letter, and come out into the gallery during his absence, was again embarrassed how to act, and whether he ought or not to go into the garden, as all his precautions would be rendered useless, if they should see and know each other after such an absence; he therefore intreated Madame de Neufpont would allow him to step in to his friend before he attended her down stairs: his look, while he made this request, convinced her his companion, whoever he was, was concerned in the pending mystery; she therefore desired he would be expeditious, else she should think he was in no haste to hear her mighty secret

Adolphus,

Adolphus hardly allowed her to cease speaking, ere he hurried into the next room, and took care to shut too the door after him, before he looked round, and was almost instantly seized by his impatient father, who trembled every joint of him: "Who was that I saw alight just now?" was his first word—"it must be her—it certainly was your mother—speak, my dearest Adolphus—only let me know whether I am under the same roof with Madame de St. Piene."

"You certainly are, my dear Sir; but for heaven's sake calm these transports: as yet my mother has not the slightest suspicion of the pleasure that awaits her."

"I am perfectly happy, my Adolphus," said the Duke, while in suspense; "I hardly know how I felt—but now I am at a certainty I can compose myself; I thought you would never have returned; I first saw the livery—but did not you expect to meet her—did not you?"

"Upon my honour, my dear Sir," said Adolphus, "our meeting was wholly unexpected

expected on both sides," mentioning where the ladies were going, not having received his letter, and what his intentions were respecting Madame de Neufpont : the Duke approved of all he had done, and agreed the Marchioness was the most proper person to communicate the agreeable tidings to his mother ; therefore hurried Adolphus away, promising to compose himself for the happy moment.

C H A P. VIII.

MADAME de Neufpont protested he had been absent half an hour, when he returned, and instantly caught hold of his arm, saying, "Come along; it will be quite dark; I have half a mind to keep you in suspense till to-morrow."

Madame de St. Piene asked her son how he had found his friend.

"Much better, my dear ma'am, and very impatient to be introduced to you, that he may have the pleasure of renewing his acquaintance with you."

"Oh! then it is some gentleman I have known," said the Duchefs.

"Was there ever fuch a curious creature?" said the Marchionefs: "come along, Duke; you fhall not ftay to enter into a thoufand details concerning your fick companion—hurry him out of the room:" The moment they were out of hearing,—“Now for pity’s fake, my dear fellow, don’t keep me in fufpence—you know it does not fuit my difpofition—Who have you got in that next room?”

"I do not mean to be very prolix, my dear ma'am," said Adolphus, as I wifh you, with every precaution your friendship can infpire you with, to prepare my mother to receive this companion of mine, who is no other than the Duke de St. Piene, my father,—in one word, who has fo long been fupposed dead."

"Oh! my poor dear Minette," said the Marchionefs, half breathlefs, and fitting down upon a bench they were near, to give vent to a violent burft of tears: her firft

emotion was succeeded by a shout of mirth ; she then protested she grew foolish as she grew older ;—" but come, do tell me more, dear Adolphus :—no, no, I won't hear a word—I will have it all from the first hand :—come, do let's go in."

Adolphus reminded her she was rather too much agitated to return immediately, and begged she would be very cautious how she broke the welcome news to his mother: She soon wiped her eyes, and declared this was by far the most disagreeable commission she had ever undertaken ; but would take a turn or two in the garden to compose her agitated spirits.

They had just reached the foot of the stairs which came down under a large archway, forming the entrance into the inn yard, when who should come laughing towards them, having just alighted from the diligence, which did not drive in, but Bazile and his companion. The moment, however,

ever, he caught sight of the Duke, Bazile turned upon his heel—it began to be dark—he therefore hoped to escape unperceived; but in his hasty retreat he had nearly overset the surgeon, who was close behind him, and now begged to know what he had seen to alarm him. Adolphus saw Vanval, and waited a moment till he came near; then said—“Remember, my good friend, I shall expect an early visit at l’Hotel de St. Firmin.”

The surgeon, seeing his Grace in company with a lady, whose dress and appearance announced her to be of some distinction, imagined he could not see either him or the Receiver General that evening; therefore bowed, and said he should certainly do himself that honour. While they were going up stairs, Madame de Neufpont said—“Do, my dear Adolphus, contrive to let me see my dear and long-lost friend before I enter upon my arduous task; for you must know I can hardly persuade myself all I have heard is not

an illusion of my poor brain—I am certain I shall know the Duke again, let him be ever so much altered.”

“ I won’t stop a moment—I find you don’t place much faith in my veracity,” said Adolphus; “ however, you shall be convinced I don’t mean to impose upon you, if I can afford you an opportunity, unperceived by Madame de St. Piene, who was astonished to see them return so speedily, she said, considering the important business they went upon.

“ Oh! soon,” said my Minette; “ but the garden is really so well laid out, with such taste and elegance, we came back to prevail upon you to take a short turn, but while we were coming up stairs, I reflected upon something else I want to communicate to Adolphus—so do take Annette with you, and I will follow you in two minutes. You deal in mysteries to-night.”

“ My good friend,” said the Duchess, “ but remember I shall soon be tired of walking

walking alone," going down stairs with her wowan, rather astonished at both her friend's and son's behaviour.

The moment she was at the bottom of the stairs, Adolphus accompanied the impatient Marchioness into his father's room. She looked at him very anxiously for a few seconds, and was trying to speak, but her heart was too full, therefore met the Duke's embrace in silence ; and when she recovered her speech, said " Now, I am perfectly satisfied, and won't keep our dear Minette a moment longer in ignorance. I should have known you, my amiable friend, had I met you any where by accident, therefore am sure your wife would, for four and-twenty years has not made near the alteration in your face and person it has in mine."

The Duke paid a few very acceptable compliments, and after a very short time spent in congratulations, and in entering into a few necessary details the Duke wished

his wife to be made acquainted with, Madame de Neufpont hastened into the garden to join her friend, leaving Adolphus with his father, having promised to send for him as soon as possible, as she meant him to have the pleasure of introducing his parents to each other.

She met with de St. Piene upon her return to the house, who asked her how she could think of sending her to see such a wilderness of weeds and rubbish? Madame de Neufpont laughed, and said it certainly afforded one very great convenience; there was a very fine harbour, where lovers might converse at their ease, or the neighbouring peasants smoke their pipes at leisure, and snuff up the fresh breeze between every whiff; "come, let you and I go and sit down there, and talk of past times."

"Oh, we can do that in our own room," said the Duchess; "it grows late; where is Adolphus?"

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“ I left him with his friend, and promised to send for them both when we were able to receive them.”

“ You mean, I presume, they are to join us when it suits the stranger : come, let’s go in.”

“ I positively meant what I said, Minette : I have already been introduced to the finest fellow I ever saw, and you will be of the same opinion when you have seen him. I am much mistaken if he does not make you repent a rash promise you once made in an evil hour.”

“ I am certain he will not be able to make you serious for an hour together. What promise did I ever make can have any thing to do with him ? Who is he ? some body I am acquainted with, I suppose, from what Adolphus said.”

“ Even so, my best Minette, and a person you will be overjoyed to see : you made a vow (for it was more than a promise) never to marry again ; therefore I merely wish to

put you upon your guard;—invalids are very interesting sometimes.”

“ I positively begin to think you wild, Marchionefs; you know I don’t like to hear you talk nonsense; I never made either a vow or a promise I did not mean strictly to keep, as far as lay in my power; so pray don’t entertain any fears for my peace of mind; this gentleman must be more than mortal to make me repent of the promise you allude to.”

“ He is more than mortal, my dear friend, a man risen, as it were from the dead.”

Madame de St. Piene had long been accustomed to her gay friend’s lively sallies; but this speech raised a hope she dare not give way to, or even acknowledge. Few people had more the command of their passions; she looked the Marchionefs full in the face, while she said, “ Pray explain what you mean, my friend; there is but one event, and that is now barely within the bounds of probability, could affect;—can it

it be possible your speech alludes, in the remotest degree, to what I have long ceased even daring to hope."

"Bless me! what have I said to make you thus anxious Minette? what am I to explain?"

"Who is the gentleman you have been introduced to, Marchioness? Your looks, and strange discourse—my son's unusual absence of mind—the seeming understanding subsisting between you—all, all requires an explanation."

"Now I suppose I shall be accused of intriguing with your son: very fine truly—but let's go up stairs, and I will tell him what pretty suspicions our *tete-a-tete* has given rise to."

"Why all these evasions, Marchioness? I trust I am able to bear either sorrowful or joyful tidings with some degree of equanimity; suspense is far more difficult to bear than the very worst certainty."

"Now you know, Minette, what a woful figure I should make in a tragedy; there-

fore, believe me, I am only the joyful herald of the most agreeable tidings; so form a wish, and it shall be granted, if possible; for Adolphus has been giving me some instructions which will enable me to deal in magic upon this occasion."

"My wish is formed," said the Duchefs, excessively agitated, and pressing the Marchionefs's arm with great violence.

"Well," said the latter, "I only hope I have not promised more than I can perform: but come along, I will exert all my skill in your favour."

When they reached their room, Madame de Neufpont poured out a glass of wine, saying, "I am not fond of too much water, drink that, and I will begin my incantations."

The Duchefs eagerly swallowed it not to delay time, and acknowledged she felt a very great sinking at her heart; "but now tell me," she exclaimed, "Is it possible! is my dear
and

and long-lost husband still living ! has he made himself known to our son."

" I have seen a gentleman who bears a strong resemblance to the Duke de St. Piene, who led you to the altar, Minette, some five-and-twenty years ago ; and must acknowledge he has endeavoured to impose himself upon Adolphus for his father."

" Now you, my dear friend, will be able to detect the fraud, if any has been practised : let me see him this moment, Marchioness ; but is he really ill ?"

" As well as I am at this instant, my best friend."

" Then it must be he," said the Duchess, flinging herself into Madame de Neufpont's arms, and giving way to a violent flood of tears she had till then been able to suppress ; and shall I be again so blest ! only say, dearest of friends, you have seen my husband, for you could not be deceived more than myself."

" I believe it was him," said Madame de Neufpont ; " but you shall see him also, and

judge for yourself, if you will ; but be composed, for I assure you there are great doubts arise in my mind, as this gentleman acknowledges, though now a widower, he has been married a second time ; nay, has even several children."

" So much the better, my friend ; his children shall be mine, and we will try who can love them most : his fortune has greatly accumulated since his absence ; he will therefore have it in his power to provide for them amply."

" Oh, I believe these young people are already very rich."

" Well, rich or poor, only let me see him, Marchioness ; I know him to be a man of honour in the strictest sense of the word ; but his actions have convinced the world in general of that important truth, and I know how he, as well as myself, has been deceived."

Adolphus, who had been occupied nearly in the same way Madame de Neufpont had
been

been, began to be anxious for the expected summons; and this quarter of an hour seemed an age to the impatient Duke. Madame de Neufpont still endeavoured to delay time, till the Duchess, hearing her son's voice in the next room, gave three raps with her hand upon the partition, which brought Adolphus to her in a moment, fearful the welcome news had proved too much for her, and that Madame de Neufpont wanted assistance. The Duke followed his son out to listen at the door; the moment he heard his wife exclaim, "Oh, my son! where, where is he?" he rushed in—"there is the impostor," said the Marchioness.

"No, it is himself," said the Duchess, sinking into her enraptured husband's arms, and all their past sorrows seemed to be forgot in this embrace.

When they were rather more composed, the Duke said, looking at his wife, "he was afraid she would have great reason to suppose
he

he paid very little respect to her memory, when she learned——”

“ I know all,” said the Duchefs; my friend tells me you have children, the fruit of a second engagement; are they boys or girls? or young enough to require my care? if they are, I shall undertake the task with pleasure.”

“ I have one brother, and two most amiable sisters, my dear mother,” said Adolphus, “ whom I am sure you will soon be very fond of; the youngest is in her sixteenth year.”

“ Then no honour will fall to my share,” said the Duchefs; “ but where do they reside?”

“ At Dunkirk, my dear Mother; and this gentleman (turning to his father) is the Receiver General my late letters have been so full of.”

“ How wonderful are the decrees of Providence!” said the amiable Duchefs.

While

While the Duke was at a loss either to express his joy or his gratitude for his wife's past and present exemplary behaviour, Adolphus participated most sincerely in their mutual feeling; and this joyful re-union seemed to make him dearer, if possible, to his now happy parents, who each gloried in a son both had such reason to be proud of.

Madame de Neufpont's gaiety exceeded all bounds, as she protested she had not dared give way to her natural disposition in her friend's presence for the last four-and-twenty years; but since the spell she had always attributed to Madame de l'Hotelsain's pious scarification of the Duke was broken, she believed she should forgive the old bigot, not though she attributed her own misfortunes in a great measure to her ruling passion.

“ I hope you don't use the word misfortune in its full sense, my gay friend,” said the Duke; blest with an amiable husband
5 and

and two lovely daughters, through what channel can calamity have reached you?"

"If we had not real evils, you know St. Piene, we conjure up imaginary ones; but I am positively fretting for my eldest daughter's folly, repeating what she had already told Adolphus, who had neither time nor inclination to enter upon the subject; indeed he had paid so little attention to what Madame de Neufpont said, he must have made a very strange story of it to the Duke.

His Grace expressed his surprise at so young a person's forming so strange a resolution; blamed Madame de St. l'Hotelsain, yet declared he thought himself obliged to her zeal, as the mark she affixed upon his shoulder might have served to prove the identity of his person: still it was very odd she should have gained such an ascendancy over Palmira's mind; and it was still more wonderful she did not chuse to give some stronger reason for so sudden a change in her disposition. Unwilling to talk any more
upon

upon the subject in so happy a moment, and thinking the amiable couple could very well dispense with her company for a short time, she rose from her seat, and asked Adolphus if he would accompany her to see how their supper went on. Actuated by the same motive, he followed her into the next room, where the Marchioness entered into several details respecting Palmira's strange determination, which she solely attributed to Madame de l'Hotelain. "However, my dear Adolphus," she proceeded, "if I was to take leave of my senses likewise, you know it would not mend the matter. Your truly amiable mother, who entertained a much more favourable opinion of her than she deserves, is as much, nay, as she is so truly kind, perhaps more hurt at her folly than I am. All there is to be said is, if the infatuated silly girl repents when it is too late, she won't have any one to blame but herself. You have seen my youngest daughter, my sister writes me word, and did not seem displeased with her; she bears rather too much resemblance

blance

blance to her giddy mother, but that failing may mend; and as neither the Duchefs nor myself could suppose you were in love with the *would-be-nun*, knowing you are not at all inclined to be romantic, and that mere report seldom excites that sentiment, we, instead of returning to Paris, when we found we had no chance of succeeding with Palmira, were hastening away to Bourbourg to fetch Ermance home, wishing to study her disposition, who had seen little of the world; and try if we could answer to our consciences to recommend her to supply the place of her sister."

Adolphus was now a most attentive auditor; he tried to look serious while Madame de Neufpont was bewailing Palmira's perverseness; but joy sparkled in his eyes at the conclusion of her speech. Stifling his feelings as much as he was able, he only gave Madame de Neufpont to understand, he should be happy to meet her proposal; and gave her some account of what had passed during

during his residence at Ypres, and what had befallen him and the Duke on their return to Dunkirk.

The Marchioness was very happy to think so shocking an accident had not been attended with more dangerous consequences; and that it had brought about the re-union of her two dearest friends. She then assured him if she did not pursue her journey to Bourbourg, she meant very speedily to send for Ermance home, who she knew was as anxious to quit the chapter-house as her sister was to bury herself in a cloister.

The appearance of supper put an end to their conversation; and Adolphus went to call his father and mother, that they might converse without restraint. As soon as every thing was placed upon the table, servants and waiters were all dismissed; they were infinitely too happy to do much honour to the repast; which, being over, madam de Neufpont, whose hopes were all revived by what
Adolphus

Adolphus had said, repeated part of their conversation, and hoped his Grace would not withhold his consent to the proposed union.

“My first, nay, my greatest wish, Marchioness, is to see my son completely happy; and I think he stands every chance of being so with the amiable Ermance, whom I soon discovered——” Adolphus coloured and looked at his father, who laughed at his confusion.—“What, I suppose he has not told you the lovely canonesse stole his heart, and made him almost repent his previous engagement to Palmira.”

“Is it possible,” said Madame de Neufpont; “has my little Ermance made so favourable an impression during that period? I shall now glory in her being like myself.”

The Duke mentioned his son's half acknowledgment, and what passed between them upon the subject; assuring the ladies he meant to have objected to his son's marrying

marrying Palmira, and to have given them his reasons for so doing.

“ *L’homme propose, et Dieu dispose*—is verified in this instance,” said the Duchess.

“ I shall think no more of the recluse,” said the Marchioness, “ since I shall thus, at all events, be related to my best friends.”

Before they separated for the night, it was agreed they should set out for Paris in the morning ; and Madame de Neufpont declared she would dispatch an express to her sister before she left St. Juste, to entreat she would accompany Ermance to Paris as soon as possible ; though she should not enter into any details, as she wished herself to inform Ermance of her happy prospect. It was midnight before they retired.

Adolphus was very happy when he found himself alone, and at liberty to reflect upon the occurrences of the evening : how sincerely did he rejoice to think his father and
mother

mother were thus happily restored to each other: Ermance next came across him;—with what pleasure did he reflect upon all that had passed at Ypres;—he could not doubt the sincerity of Palmira's vocation, since it had produced so agreeable and unexpected a change in his matrimonial prospects; he should be at liberty to speak the language of his heart when he next addressed Ermance!—with what raptures did he anticipate their meeting!—their love was reciprocal, he was convinced.

These agreeable retrospections kept him awake till the clock struck two, when he tried to compose himself to sleep, but found it rather difficult till about three; he had nearly forgot himself, when something came with great force against his chamber door; he listened for a moment, and heard somebody in the passage; instantly jumped out of bed, as the first idea that struck him was, that his mother was ill; but before he reached his door, which he had fastened, he heard
different

different voices in the gallery, therefore stopped to listen; and was almost instantly saluted with another rat-tat; without speaking he opened the door with a very sudden motion, calling out—"What is the matter?" when behold, to his no small surprise, and real anger, who should he discover by the light of the moon, but Bazile and his two companions, drunk, and laughing at the heroic feat they had done; but the sight of the Duke, and his voice, which, much as Bazile was intoxicated, he recollected, made him instantly attempt a retreat; when in trying to pass his companions in the passage, he fell at his length, who left him to get up as he could, and made the best of their way down stairs. Adolphus called to them and protested if they did not immediately withdraw to their own room, they should feel the weight of his power in the morning. During this time Bazile was trying to recover his feet, and had just succeeded, when Adolphus seized him by the collar, and dragged him into his own room, saying, "I think I have
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the advantage of knowing you, Sir; and as I presume you have something of importance to say to me, since you thus chose to disturb my rest, I desire you would please to be explicit."

His greatest enemies might have pitied the terrified, trembling Bazile at this unfortunate juncture; to be thus caught at such an unseasonable hour, rioting and in liquor, and thus far on his road to Paris, by the man of all others he most dreaded, soon brought him to his recollection: what to say or do, he could not tell;—what excuse could he make for breaking his rest? he only hoped it was not light enough for the Duke to be certain as to his person, and wished, if possible, to make his retreat without speaking; he merely mumbled out some incoherent excuses, and affected not to know who he was addressing.

"Mr. Bazile de Melac, I am afraid you are troubled with a very short memory,"
said

said Adolphus, shutting his door, "and are not near so much intoxicated as you would make me believe;—but do me the favour to take possession of that bed," pointing to another empty one in his room; "I don't mean to force you to set up all night."

Bazile stared, stammered out—"I beg your Grace ten thousand pardons—had I known you slept in this room."

"I dare say," said Adolphus, interrupting him, "you would have allowed me to rest in peace; but had you thought you could have done it with impunity, you would have disturbed the whole house for the sake of a frolic!"

"*We* could not sleep, your Grace; the house is so full they made us treble beds in the room where we slept: and there being two nuns of our party, who slept in some adjoining apartment, it was proposed by some of the company to go and frighten them. I tried to persuade them against acting so foolishly."

"That I don't doubt, Mr. Bazile, nay, can easily suppose you were forced to accom-

pany them upon this glorious expedition; however, take possession of the bed I have allotted you, as I don't mean to expiate upon the impropriety of your behaviour just now to the company I find you in, whose chief study, and greatest amusement is wanton mischief, and what they term reputable folly; but such folly seldom escapes unpunished: and that you have undertaken this journey with such companions, and in such a conveyance, for I know you alighted from the diligence unknown to your excellent father, I have not the slightest doubt; judge therefore how you must stand in my esteem.—A very fine excuse truly, for a young man of your age to say you were drawn in to act absurdly!—what benefit, in that case, pray, have you derived from the education you have received? your father's numerous virtues and exemplary conduct makes the slightest deviation in your duty towards such a parent an absolute crime: I have hardly common patience with you, when I reflect upon the anxious moments you have already, and continue to, occasion
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that best of men ! However, Sir, if after what I have said you can reconcile yourself to the step you have taken, pursue your journey, your present wild career, till dread of being dishonoured by follies, which will soon degenerate into crimes, forces your amiable father, much against his will, to confine you for life in some of those houses set apart for the retreat of young men, who rebel, as you are at present doing, against parental authority.—Don't fancy I shall endeavour to widen the breach you are making with the man of all others I respect and revere : a very short time may perhaps convince you, Bazile, my practice accords with my precepts ; that you may, nay I perceived *were* rather in liquor, I can allow, and must say I think it affords you a very satisfactory excuse for disturbing me by your clamour ; but for fear any other company should be equal sufferers through your excesses, let me once more seriously advise you to go to bed ; you can see your way, and I will take care you shall be called in time to pursue your journey—

journey—a few hours rest may prevent your being a sufferer from the effects of your intemperance. Surely if any man could ever see himself drunk, he would forswear so low and despicable a vice.”

Adolphus returned into bed immediately after he had shut his door, though he had placed Bazile in the most advantageous situation to observe his looks during this harangue: he now no longer expected to prevent him from pursuing his journey—certain no arguments he should chuse to make use of, would induce the weak youth, willingly, to relinquish the pleasures he hoped to enjoy at Paris. Adolphus had given orders to be called before the diligence went off, wishing to see the surgeon; therefore knew he should keep his word with Bazile; who, as soon as the Duke ceased speaking, again made an attempt to excuse himself.

Adolphus interrupted him by saying—“ A few hours repose will clear your intellects, Mr. Bazile, and enable you to enter

enter upon your defence with rather more perspicuity than you are favoured with at present:—reflect on what I have said, and remember it is in your power to convince me you have been imprudently drawn in to undertake an enterprize unknown to your father, who, I know, sent you upon a visit to some relations at Havre: you may still re-trace your steps, and proceed thither; I will undertake to procure you a carriage for your journey, and, to make your excuses to your present companions; one of my servants shall accompany you:—I give you my word of honour your father shall never have room to suppose you were remindful of your duty; if you are inclined to follow my advice, write to the Receiver-General, as soon as you reach the place of your destination, and honestly confess your intention of going to Paris; don't mention me; let him suppose you reflected upon the natural uneasiness your wild conduct must give him, and that reflections induced you to return to Havre: thus will you raise yourself in his and my esteem

esteem ; for you need not doubt his forgiveness. I have said a great deal more than I at first intended—possibly to very little purpose. It grows late ; therefore, with your leave, I will once more endeavour to take a little rest.”

“ Would to heaven I had never awoke you !—such an eternal moralizer !” thought Bazile, without daring to utter his thoughts.

He was for some time undecided whether to lie down, or endeavour to make his escape ; for he was more eager than ever to rejoin his companions ; but the Duke, he observed, had bolted the door, and occupied the bed nearest it ; not knowing what might be the consequence of making the attempt, he crawled towards the other bed, and flung himself upon it without undressing.

Adolphus took no notice of this, but once more tried to forget himself, and soon succeeded ; while Bazile lay tossing and turning till day-light, revolving different plans

to

to make his escape from this his greatest enemy, (for in that light he now looked upon the Duke), whose remonstrances were all lost upon him; at last he heard Adolphus was in a very profound sleep; he was therefore tempted to seize the favourable opportunity. The Duke had given him to understand, he did not mean to widen the breach his frolic, if discovered, might occasion between him and his father; besides, his Grace was going to Paris, therefore might not see the Receiver-General again till the ensuing summer; there was no chance of their corresponding; and the Regiment de Civrac might be removed to some other garrison town before the Duke joined it again. In short, Bazile found so many good reasons for following the bent of his own inclinations, he stepped softly from the bed, took his shoes in his hand, and crept towards the door, which he unbolted and opened so gently as not to wake Adolphus; and at the worst he could say he was afraid the diligence might set off without him; as he had determined to stick

to the tale he had told Vanval, that he was going to Paris upon private business for his father—for what other excuse could he make for not accepting the Duke's confederate offers? he felt his heart much lighter when he had closed the door after him, and put on his shoes; anxious to find his companions he hurried down stairs.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



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